ERIODICALS

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On the Character of Generation X

Diana Schaub

What's Happening in Business Schools? *Marianne M. Jennings*

Reducing Poverty, Not Inequality *Martin Feldstein*

The Monochrome Society *Amitai Etzioni*

Croly's Progressive America *Wilfred M. McClay*

Urban Illusions

Pietro S. Nivola • *Fred Siegel*

BOOKS IN REVIEW:

James Q. Wilson on cultural meltdown

Alvin Kernan on democratic art

Irwin M. Stelzer on economists

Heather Mac Donald on the working poor

James Nuechterlein on the feminist church

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CONTENTS

On the Character of Generation X	*Diana Schaub*	3
What's Happening in Business Schools?	*Marianne M. Jennings*	25
Reducing Poverty, Not Inequality	*Martin Feldstein*	33
The Monochrome Society	*Amitai Etzioni*	42
Croly's Progressive America	*Wilfred M. McClay*	56
Urban Illusions:		
Are Europe's Cities Better?	*Pietro S. Nivola*	73
Is Regional Government the Answer?	*Fred Siegel*	85
Books in Review:		
The Great Disruption, by Francis Fukuyama *James Q. Wilson*		99
Democracy and the Arts, edited by Arthur M. Melzer, Jerry Weinberger, M. Richard Zinman *Alvin Kernan*		105
What Do Economists Contribute?, edited by Daniel Klein *Irwin M. Stelzer*		111
No Shame in My Game, by Katherine S. Newman *Heather Mac Donald*		116
The Church Impotent, by Leon J. Podles *James Nuechterlein*		121

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On the character of Generation X

DIANA SCHAUB

BEFORE I say anything either in praise or blame of today's young people, it might be well to remember what Montesquieu says in his *Spirit of the Laws*: "It is not young people who degenerate; they are ruined only when grown men have already been corrupted." The young may indeed be degenerate, but if they are, it is their elders who ought to answer for it. Since the generation of students in college now was raised by the Baby Boom generation, moral soundness was perhaps not to be expected. We have recently had an all too revealing look at the respective degeneracy and corruption of these two generations in the persons of Monica Lewinsky and Bill Clinton. But before we start bashing the Boomers, and lamenting the ruination they have wrought, we should note that Montesquieu's maxim would

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lessen the blame attaching to the Boomers as well, since it is the World War II generation that bears responsibility for them. Somehow, the kernels at least of that self-absorption and moral heedlessness were already present—yes, even in the generation that is being called "the greatest generation." (Perhaps it shouldn't have been so surprising to see the decorated war veteran Bob Dole recommending against impeachment and then becoming the pitchman for Viagra.) Virtue cannot be passed intact from one generation to the next, because it never fully exists in any generation. The regression that Montesquieu implies would take us all the way back to the Founders, and cast doubt on the potency of even their pristine virtue.

Montesquieu's point seems to be that those regimes that depend for their existence on the inculcation and transmission of virtue through the generations are doomed to decline. If the political life of the nation tracks closely the moral life of its citizens, then that nation is in trouble. Thomas Jefferson, in the very midst of the American Revolution, declared, "From the conclusion of this war, we shall be going down hill." The beginning, it seems, is the beginning of the end. And the adjective that most frequently modifies "virtue" is "lost."

A fine-tuned machine?

Not every regime, however, need be so hostage to the shortfall of virtue. In monarchies, for instance, Montesquieu says that "politics accomplishes great things with as little virtue as it can, just as in the finest machines art employs as few motions, forces, and wheels as possible." As a result, "In well-regulated monarchies everyone will be almost a good citizen, and one will rarely find someone who is a good man." In such a mechanized political system, which keeps its equilibrium by means of its perpetual motion, one need not fret over moral decline. Instead, one just admits to living on a lower plane, and blithely joins Montesquieu in declaring that "not all moral vices are political vices." Or as our politicians say, "It's time to move on." In a regime of this type, the education of the young is neither so crucial nor so laborious.

In many respects, our own system seems to be an egalitarian version of Montesquieu's "well-regulated monarchy" where "each person works for the common good, believing he works

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for his individual interests." Given the absence of hereditary privileges, it was necessary for the American Founders to craft what Madison, in the *Federalist Papers*, called "inventions of prudence" to supply the place of the accidents of history. Through a judicious parceling out of power, "the private interest of every individual may be a sentinel over the public right." Not surprisingly, the U.S. Constitution contains no provision for governmental involvement in civic or moral education; properly modeled institutions will unobtrusively model individuals to fit. Contrast the Constitution's silence on this score with the words of William Penn's Preface to the Pennsylvania Frame of Government (written in 1682):

> That, therefore, which makes a good constitution, must keep it, viz: men of wisdom and virtue, qualities, that because they descend not with worldly inheritances, must be carefully propagated by a virtuous education of youth; for which after ages will owe more to the care and prudence of founders, and the successive magistracy, than to their parents, for their private patrimonies.

Despite the structuralist thrust of the American founding, a concern for republican character formation was not altogether jettisoned. Some of the state constitutions, particularly that of Massachusetts (1780), paid attention to the inculcation of virtue, providing for "the support and maintenance of public Protestant teachers of piety, religion, and morality" and authorizing the legislature to "enjoin upon all the subjects an attendance upon the instructions of the public teachers aforesaid." Likewise, the Northwest Ordinance (1787) declared: "Religion, morality, and knowledge, being necessary to good government and the happiness of mankind, schools and the means of education shall forever be encouraged." Among the founders, Franklin, Jefferson, and Washington were notable for their attempts to revive the ancient idea of public schooling, complete with the ancient stress on patriotism, citizenship, and military self-sufficiency, but without the classical republican hostility to commerce and technological advance. Education was understood to be key to both economic and political independence. Indeed, one might say that the whole question of civic and moral education took on added complexity, as the aim of education shifted from reverential to liberationist. For the first time in history, a republic welcomed, perhaps even

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required, the release of the individual from tutelary powers, and in particular from religious authority.

A civic education

In his *Politics*, Aristotle says that "the most important task of the legislator is education." To a certain extent, our elected officials seem to agree. No politician gives a speech today without calling for improvements in education. However, most of this concern seems to be a new, purely economic variant of the national anxiety that first arose during the Sputnik era. Education is viewed as an instrument of global economic competition. If our second-graders can't out-add the Japanese what will become of us? The nation here is synonymous with GNP. Educational institutions themselves often put a gentler, more cooperative face on the global marketplace; their mission statements speak of preparing students to live and work "in a diverse and changing world." The difference between the more nationalistic and the more cosmopolitan formulations is not very material however. Both treat education as essentially vocational, and in their emphasis on the economic both abstract from citizenship. The politicians are worried about the comparative test scores of American youngsters, but they view those youngsters as future workers, not future citizens. Back in the 1950s, at least, the call for educational betterment was tied to larger and nobler national purposes. The space race that led to an emphasis on math and science education was envisioned as part of the contest between democratic freedom and totalitarian communism. The usually thankless task of teaching algebra to adolescents might be redeemed if one believed it was integral to the fate of liberty.

In the midst of our contemporary debates about the crisis in public schooling, we seem to have forgotten the most essential point—a point on which ancient and modern political philosophers are in complete agreement: namely that, as Montesquieu says, "the laws of education should be relative to the principles of the government." Aristotle puts it this way: "Children ... must necessarily be educated looking to the regime, at least if it makes any difference with a view to the city's being excellent that ... its children ... are excellent. But it necessarily makes a difference: ... from the children come

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those who are partners in the regime." We need to reconsider education in the context of citizenship. What would it mean to educate with a view to the perpetuation of our institutions?

I don't mean to say that the economic perspective is illegitimate. I do mean to say it is insufficient. It is true that American education has always had a very practical, occupational orientation. Accordingly, in the report Jefferson wrote for the University of Virginia, he listed as the first object of primary education "to give to every citizen the information he needs for the transaction of his own business." But his list did not stop there; it concluded with higher objects:

> To understand his duties to his neighbors and country, and to discharge with competence the functions confided to him by either; To know his rights; to exercise with order and justice those he retains; to choose with discretion the fiduciary of those he delegates; and to notice their conduct with diligence, with candor, and judgment.

In the past, there were organizations that were wonderfully adept at combining economic and political aims, weaving together in Jeffersonian fashion a teaching about rights, interests, and duties. I spoke with my dad recently about his youthful involvement in Future Farmers of America (FFA) and 4-H. My hunch had been that these were not narrowly vocational programs—and that was amply confirmed by what he told me. The purpose of FFA was "to provide training in farmer-citizenship." That meant that participants not only received hands-on instruction in animal husbandry, farm implements, and crop science, but that they learned "how to conduct and take part in a public meeting, to speak in public, ... and to assume civic responsibility." They actually had contests in running a meeting according to Robert's Rules of Order. (Having recently served on a number of college committees, I can say that my colleagues and I could have benefited from such training.) Extemporaneous debate was also much practiced.

The 4-H program was similarly civic-minded. To the best of my dad's recollection, the pledge went as follows: "I pledge my head to clearer thinking, my heart to greater loyalty, my hands to larger service, and my health to better living for my community, my country, and my world." My father's FFA and 4-H experience was not rendered irrelevant when he left the

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farm behind. It no longer seems accidental to me that this future farmer went on to teach high-school mathematics in the Sputnik era, and then entered the new field of computers, becoming a successful corporate executive and civic leader.

A pre-professional education

Whereas the old-style vocational training was public-spirited and liberal, today's so-called "liberal education" is often narrowly pre-professional. One can find on most college campuses today a pre-law society, an extracurricular organization that might be thought roughly analogous to the Future Farmers of America. The pre-law society helps students prepare for the LSATs and then assists them in applying to schools on the basis of their scores. There is little or no sustained consideration of the role of lawyers and judges in a constitutional order—and certainly no aspiration to educate lawyer-citizens.

I wonder whether today's students would participate in a group called Future Lawyers of America. In my experience, many students headed to law school do not intend to practice law. Or so they are very ready to say. Aware of the disrepute attaching to the profession, they are quick to assure you that they just want the degree, in the belief that it opens up other, as yet undetermined, possibilities. They are pre-law non-lawyers. I suspect also that they would be uncomfortable with the declarative force of the older terminology. They would not want to label themselves as future anything. They are not going to be a determinate thing when they grow up. They speak of careers, but not callings. They view law or medicine or journalism as offering interesting opportunities for purely individual satisfaction and advancement. They do not view the law as a profession or a discipline. To be a Future Lawyer of America would suggest that one was part of a larger whole and had a role, both professional and political, to play within that whole. Signing up for the pre-law society does not entail any such expectations.

Yet I suspect students would be happier if they could escape the endless "pre"-ing and prepping and make their way back to a more grounded future. I suspect they would be happier if they could get out of these inchoate societies composed of selves and instead belong to an America with a shape

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and a content. What the economization and globalization of education means for students is atomization. They are isolated beings, readying themselves to compete with every other person on the planet. No wonder they start interviewing for jobs and lining up employment internships the moment they arrive on campus. By the time we graduate them, their résumés are longer than mine. But they have only the vaguest sense of how a liberal education will assist them in their future, other than providing time and materiel for résumé padding. They spend their college years preparing their applications, rather than preparing themselves by application. Many of them are already PR specialists.

Those less anxiety-ridden look upon college as their last chance at the sandlot. One young man told me that college was really just four years in which to play around until he was old enough to enter the business world. He seemed to expect maturity to arrive automatically when he exchanged his baseball cap for a suit and tie. (Or perhaps he believed that maturity would not be required even then.) Incidentally, if one is looking for symptoms of moral decline, the omnipresent baseball cap is as good as any. I don't know when the cap craze began, but it strikes me as aggressively juvenile, especially when caps are worn in the classroom. The only thing that somewhat reconciles me is that it does seem to be an attempt on the part of young men to claim some article of clothing for themselves as males. While young women will occasionally sport a baseball cap, it remains basically male gear. Since the poor fellows can't figure out what manhood should mean, they settle for the irritating bad boy instead. So entrenched now is the practice that even nice boys don't know that indoor cap wearing is a breach of etiquette. Apparently, neither parents nor teachers bother to inform them, or so I gather from the astonished looks I get when I upbraid them for "dissing" me. Still there is something reassuring in this atavistic male longing to wear a hat. In the past, most male vocations had a hat proper to them, a hat tailored to the task and indicative of the kind and degree of authority the wearer exercised. That whole wondrous array has been leveled. Yet, if democratic equality and boyishness must reign, I suppose it is only fitting that the triumphant headgear be that of the quintessential American game.

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Whether students view college as a résumé builder or a holding pattern, they all believe that their real education will be in the world. Just as Montesquieu said: "In monarchies the principal education is not in the public institutions where children are instructed; in a way, education begins when one enters the world." Since today's kids are precocious enough to know already many of the lessons of that fashionable world, they heavily discount the lessons of their schoolmasters. They are either not serious as students, or they are serious in an illiberal way.

Why go to college?

I recently tried out a little thought experiment on my students, in an attempt to elicit their real thoughts on learning, work, and leisure. I asked these 60 students to imagine that each was the recipient of 100 million dollars. What would they do—and particularly would they remain in college? If so, would their studies change at all, in direction or intensity? I was initially heartened when all but a couple of students said they would stay in college. I thought maybe this indicated that they didn't, after all, subscribe to the instrumental view of education. Freed, in imagination at least, from economic necessity, they could now see that they valued learning for its own sake. Guess again.

The seniors said they would stay because there were only two months to go, so they might as well finish what they had started. The most one can say for this is that it is a work ethic, of sorts. Asked to imagine themselves freshmen, nearly all said they would still stay—to socialize. Without the annoyance of classes, college could be even more fun than it is already, with its great housing, great parties, and a whole army of people devising entertainments and cleaning up after you. What must the hard-working janitorial staff think of these privileged campers as they wipe up the weekend vomitus and repair the destruction to the buildings and grounds? The level of vandalism, assault, and general mayhem that routinely occurs on college campuses is appalling. In such a setting, students are insulated from the ordinary consequences of such behavior. In place of the old *in loco parentis* model, we have the maxim "let's keep the police out of this if we can."

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On a more upbeat note, those who were first-generation college students said they would stay because of what their graduation would mean to their families. The students themselves, however, didn't seem to share fully in the conviction of education's importance, but they did manifest genuine filial piety. When I asked whether any of them would remain perpetual students, that possibility occasioned puzzled looks. As to what they would do after the party ended, avoiding boredom seemed to concern them. Work and travel were their main choices to stave off boredom. Since many of them expressed an intention to work in some capacity despite their windfall, they felt they would still need the certification of a college degree. Well over half, however, admitted that they would be less assiduous students. There were a few who felt strongly that it was important to work hard in order to prove one's capacity to be self-supporting. They intended to hide their fortune from their children, in order to school them in self-reliance as well. None was prepared to decline the gift, however.

"Experience" properly understood

The travel bug had already bitten a number of my students. They made the case that travel was a form of education, and that this experiential learning did not have the drawbacks of book learning. Clearly, one was pleasant, the other painful. I would grant that this mania for travel—which today's elders share with the younger generation—is a manifestation of a natural desire to know and to broaden one's encounters with the world. But I believe it is also indicative of a dearth of imagination. Lacking internal resources to avoid boredom, one must seek external stimuli: new sights to strike the eye, new sounds, new smells and tastes. Moreover, these new experiences need not be the catalyst for either reflection or action. They can just be promiscuously enjoyed.

My students seem to regard travel as the 3-D version of television, where both spectator and spectacle are in motion. In this perfectly kinetic cinema, learning occurs by osmosis. Thomas Hobbes, that democratic reductionist, said "prudence is but experience." My students implicitly agree. They follow Hobbes in almost wholly attributing wisdom to experience and

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in making experience itself an intellectually passive event. Put yourself in a new setting and let that setting wash over you. Our academic institutions eagerly join in and give credit for subjecting yourself to new settings in the form of internships and living abroad. Even worse, they often spout a postmodern doctrine of the incommunicability of experience—popularly expressed in such sayings as "guess you had to be there," "it's a black thing," and "men just don't get it"—thereby denying a common humanity and the possibility of reasoned discourse. On this model, experience isolates, confines, excludes, and silences.

For a more adequate understanding of the meaning of experience (and its embodiment in literature) we might turn to Henry James. In his essay "The Art of Fiction," James responds to the cliché that a novelist must "write from experience." All well and good, but what is experience? According to James:

> It is an immense sensibility, a kind of huge spider-web of the finest silken threads suspended in the chamber of consciousness, and catching every air-borne particle in its tissue. It is the very atmosphere of the mind; and when the mind is imaginative ... it takes to itself the faintest hints of life, it converts the very pulses of the air into revelations.

James tells of an English novelist who

> was much commended for the impression she had managed to give in one of her tales of the nature and way of life of the French Protestant youth. She had been asked where she learned so much about this recondite being, she had been congratulated on her peculiar opportunities. These opportunities consisted in her having once, in Paris, as she ascended a staircase, passed an open door where, in the household of a *pasteur*, some of the young Protestants were seated at table round a finished meal.... The power to guess the unseen from the seen, to trace the implication of things, to judge the whole piece by the pattern, the condition of feeling life in general so completely that you are well on your way to knowing any particular corner of it—this cluster of gifts may almost be said to constitute experience.

So yes, James says, write from experience, but "try to be one of the people on whom nothing is lost!" I fear that many of my students could trek the surface of the whole globe and

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come back without an experience worthy of the name. And I suspect that a lifetime of this culture-surfing will prove as unsatisfying as channel-surfing or net-surfing. Of course, none of us has a web as finely and densely spun as Henry James, that master of spidery consciousness, but we will never become better spinners so long as the dominant view of experience is such a debased one. Universities should be places where the capaciousness of the human mind is always in view and where that capaciousness is not regarded as a function of what James called the "accident of residence." After all, cosmic and cosmopolitan range is as evident in the homebodies (Socrates, Jane Austen, Emily Dickinson) as in the travelers (Xenophon, Herman Melville, Walt Whitman).

Thinking about leisure

My little hypothetical about the lottery jackpot confirmed what Alexis de Tocqueville said of Americans long ago: We are a nation "restless in the midst of abundance." We are without a conception of leisure. The Greek word for leisure was *schole,* from which we get the words school and scholar. That etymological connection has been lost, however. Faced with the prospect of a life of leisure most of my students could only imagine two possibilities: "vegging out"—a locution that graphically encapsulates a less-than-human alternative—and "keeping busy" through a combination of work and travel. (Tocqueville had already taken note of this particular formula for busyness: "If at the end of a year of unremitting labor [the American] finds he has a few days' vacation, his eager curiosity whirls him over the vast extent of the United States, and he will travel fifteen hundred miles in a few days to shake off his happiness").

W.E.B. DuBois, in one of his many fine essays on education in *The Souls of Black Folk*, illustrates well the original link between scholarship and leisure. Listen to his description of Atlanta University, one of a number of black liberal arts colleges founded in the wake of the Civil War:

> The hundred hills of Atlanta are not all crowned with factories. On one, toward the west, the setting sun throws three buildings in bold relief against the sky. The beauty of the group lies in its simple unity:—a broad lawn of green rising from the red street

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> with mingled roses and peaches; north and south, two plain and stately halls; boldly graceful, sparingly decorated, and with one low spire. It is a restful group,—one never looks for more; it is all here, all intelligible. There I live, and there I hear from day to day the low hum of restful life. In winter's twilight, when the red sun glows, I can see the dark figures pass between the halls to the music of the night-bell. In the morning, when the sun is golden, the clang of the day-bell brings the hurry and laughter of three hundred young hearts from hall and street, and from the busy city below,—children all dark and heavy-haired,—to join their clear young voices in the music of the morning sacrifice. In a half-dozen class-rooms they gather then,—here to follow the love-song of Dido, here to listen to the tale of Troy divine; there to wander among the stars, there to wander among men and nations,—and elsewhere other well-worn ways of knowing this queer world. Nothing new, no time-saving devices,—simply old time-glorified methods of delving for Truth, and searching out the hidden beauties of life, and learning the good of living. The riddle of existence is the college curriculum that was laid before the Pharaohs, that was taught in the groves by Plato, that formed the *trivium* and *quadrivium*, and is today laid before the freedmen's sons by Atlanta University. And this course of study will not change; its methods will grow more deft and effectual, its content richer by toil of scholar and sight of seer; but the true college will ever have one goal,—not to earn meat, but to know the end and aim of that life which meat nourishes.

One wishes a few college presidents would pay heed, and rethink their blind worship of "the bottom line," their embrace of the corporate model, their obsession with new buildings and new programs, their competitive quest for funding and rankings.

Now perhaps this forgetfulness about the goal of higher education is of no concern; after all, if "the business of America is business," then getting and spending are the right things to do. But we might want to remember Aristotle's warning about the political consequences of mistaken priorities. Aristotle says, "War must be for the sake of peace, occupation for the sake of leisure." In his discussion of leisure in book VII of the *Politics*, Aristotle severely faults the Spartan regime for its crude emphasis on utility and its militarism. He concludes that:

> Most cities of this sort preserve themselves when at war, but once having acquired [imperial] rule they come to ruin; they lose

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> their edge, like iron, when they remain at peace. The reason is that the legislator has not educated them to be capable of being at leisure.

While Americans are in no danger of glorifying war (indeed, we are more likely to fail to see the need for war as a means to peace), we do, I believe, share the Spartan perplexity about leisure. What Aristotle says about the effects of peace on a martial people may be equally true of the effects of prosperity on a laboring people. Once the work ethic erodes, we are doomed, for we know nothing else. The American generations that confronted war and depression acquitted themselves admirably, but their virtue was, like Sparta's, somewhat forced. It may sound odd, but it is the post-Cold War generations that face the toughest test. They must demonstrate whether the nation can keep its edge without necessity as a whetstone. Is it only the fight for freedom that makes us free, while the enjoyment of freedom debases us? My students have in effect won the lottery by being born in America in the late twentieth century. Are they being educated in a way to make them full possessors and guardians of that inheritance?

Sluttish women, brutish men

We made a big detour from a liberal understanding of leisure once before. Suburban middle-class American women in the 1950s and 1960s found themselves blessed with hard-working husbands, timesaving technology, and comparatively minimal child-care responsibilities (a result of small families and public schooling), yet by all accounts, they felt empty and incomplete. In *The Feminine Mystique*, Betty Friedan called this "the problem that has no name," a problem that "cannot be understood in terms of the age-old material problems of man: poverty, sickness, hunger, cold." Friedan was right that the malaise these privileged women were experiencing was a result of "a slow death of mind and spirit." But she was wrong in saying that the problem had no name—its name was boredom. Feminism was born of boredom, not oppression. And what was the solution to this quandary? Feminists clamored to become wage-slaves; they resolutely fled the challenge of leisure.

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Perhaps it is unfair to fault feminists for having no higher conception of value than what DuBois called the "Gospel of Pay." Like other Americans, these women had formed the habit "of interpreting the world in dollars." Their assertiveness aped the already misguided American male assertiveness. Feminists would have been better advised to hold out for the superior worth and satisfactions of the domestic realm or perhaps to encourage women to be the vanguard for nobler aspirations. Women could have pursued liberal studies, politics, art, civic culture, and philanthropy. What they needed was an education to make them capable of leisure; what they got instead was a doubling of their duties. Today's overburdened women are beginning to realize that obligatory participation in the work force is not the route to self-realization (or family cohesion or societal happiness). Feminism should have been either intransigently conservative or truly radical. Instead, it was conformist to the core.

One hopeful sign among my students is the ambivalence of many of them, men and women alike, about the current sexual dispensation. They regret the loss of the rituals of courtship, although they feel a little guilty about that regret, since they have been told that courtesy and modesty are sexist (and sexually repressive) impositions. Wendy Shalit, the young woman whose recent book, *A Return to Modesty*, has garnered so much attention, is rapidly gaining a hearing. After I recommended the book to a couple of my students, I soon got reports that young women were spontaneously reading chapters aloud to one another in the dorm rooms and circulating copies from hand to hand, like samizdat. If the reinstitution of female virtue requires female solidarity—what Shalit calls "the cartel of virtue"—the first steps in that direction are being taken in those earnest discussions.

Sadly, the young women will receive no support from their elders. The official policy of college counseling centers and student-life bureaucrats is that it is impermissible to advise young women on the steps they might take to avoid date rape and other forms of sexual predation. Apparently, to tell a young woman that going out half-naked for a night of heavy drinking in the local bars is risky behavior is a form of "blaming the victim." I have spoken with a number of the upper-

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classmen who serve as resident advisors in the dorms and they feel they are being prevented from offering real guidance to their young charges. They have workshops in how to respond to these incidents but not in how to prevent them (other than offering martial arts classes, of course). In the grip of the dogma of sexual equality, colleges are essentially conspiring in the debasement of students. The women become sluttish, and the men brutish. But something in many of these young women resists, not always in the most effective ways; they punish themselves via eating disorders, they seek escape in alcohol, or they convert to radical feminism and make a fetish of their victimization. If those who talk about "empowering" women mean it, the Shalit book would be mandatory reading for every new female college student.

Sexual politics

I have one female student of hardier temperament (whom I'll call Polly) who might be capable of sparking a revolution for republican sexual morality single-handedly. In a recent class, preparatory to teaching Machiavelli's *Mandragola,* I told the story of the rape of Lucretia. If you remember your Roman history, Lucretia was cornered by Sextus, the son of the Tarquin king, and given the option of acceding to sexual relations with him, with the promise that no one would know of her humiliation, or refusing such relations, in which case he would not violate her, but he would kill her and one of her slaves, justifying her death with the claim that he had found the two in bed together and had acted to vindicate the wronged husband. Not much of a choice: Lucretia can sacrifice the integrity of her body and will, but maintain her reputation for marital fidelity; or she can protect her chastity at the cost both of her life and her reputation.

Before I revealed to the class the conclusion of the legendary story, we spent some time discussing what was at stake. Polly finally interrupted the discussion with an impatient and imploring, "What did Lucretia do?" I told them that Lucretia acceded to the rapist, but she did not keep her humiliation hidden. Upon her husband's return, she told him what had happened. Of course, it was her word against that of the prince. So, as the proof of the veracity of her accusation, she

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plunged a dagger into her breast. By her suicide she offered irrefutable evidence that she had been grievously dishonored. Her husband and other male kin took up the bloody dagger and led a successful revolution against the Tarquin dynasty, thereby founding the Roman Republic. With her eyes on fire, Polly blurted out, "That is the best story I have ever heard."

While many of her fellow classmates were either uncomprehending or uncomfortable, she seemed immediately to understand and admire Lucretia's act. She saw how women who insist on respect can shame men into manliness. She grasped the political consequences of this vindication of a woman's honor as well. She saw that valorous Roman patriotism was undergirded by the spirited modesty of Roman matrons. (Purely as an aside, I would contend that the current occupant of the Oval Office is another Sextus Tarquinius. Our nation's unwillingness to punish him is more evidence of the failure of contemporary feminism.) One young woman like Polly could reestablish sexual modesty and political liberty if not through her heroic death, then maybe by the kind of family she establishes. I hope she will have 10 kids and 100 grandkids.

On a less dramatic note, another hopeful sign is the number of top-notch young people, especially women, considering careers in elementary and secondary teaching. Even just seven years ago when I started teaching, all of the young women would have had their sights set on law school or corporate employment. That was what smart, ambitious women with a humanities degree were supposed to want. However, just in the last two years, all of my best female students (and a couple of top-notch young men as well) have decided on teaching instead, sometimes to the dismay of their parents. Clearly, this may just be an anomaly, but I pray it is a trend.

The feminist depreciation of women's domestic role led to depreciation also of women's traditional career choices, teaching and nursing. But perhaps those traditional careers were also natural careers for women—remember the Socratic metaphor of teaching as "midwifery." Despite the surprised or disappointed looks they encounter, these future teachers refuse to be apologetic. They believe that teaching youngsters is a task that will summon all of their ingenuity, intelligence, and insight into human character. Teaching is, as W.E.B. DuBois

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said, "the contact of living souls." Especially since these young people have availed themselves of the new routes by which to avoid the usual processing of the "education" departments, I can't help but hope that my own chances of reaching students may be better 10 to 15 years from now.

The too tolerant society

The decent souls among Generation X are, I believe, more impressive, morally, than my own Baby Boom generation. But at every turn, their best instincts are thwarted by the hegemony of the Boomers. This is especially the case when it comes to developing the capacity for moral and political judgment.

Today's students have been drilled in relativism, of both the cultural and individual varieties. They have also been drilled in toleration, as a universal desideratum. To keep these two contemporary dogmas marching along in sync, students perform a very odd and, I think, very dangerous stutter step, resulting in many of them concluding that they are obliged to respect all manner of horrendous practices: slavery, human sacrifice, cannibalism, genocide, you name it. Their relativism tells them that there is no principled ground on which to say that such acts are wrong. Meanwhile, the only principle that does exist for them—though on what basis it would be hard to say—mandates equal respect for all beliefs and practices. Often, they seem so oblivious of human suffering, so unaware of human evil, and so ignorant of history that they don't really know what they are permitting when they yoke together this absolute tolerance with a relativist perspective. This is niceness gone seriously awry. (One is reminded of the etymology of the word "nice" which goes back to the Latin root *nescius*, meaning "ignorant.") Those who actually have some reservations about genocide and slavery don't know how to justify expressing those reservations. They know they mustn't impose their views on anyone else, and yet, it does seem to them that the victims are at least as deserving of respect as the executioners.

It might help them to know that, in its original formulation, liberal toleration always contained a qualification: No tolerance for the intolerant. Old-fashioned liberal tolerance

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was demanding, in that it required enlightenment, of others, as well as oneself. The newfangled toleration, by demanding openness to the point of mindlessness (or spiritlessness), offering no resistance to the spread of fanaticism and extremism, risks becoming a vehicle of illiberalism. From being part of the arsenal of enlightenment, tolerance has become a form of know-nothingism. One gets moral credit for recusing oneself from the whole business of judging, discerning, and discriminating. It is moral to be amoral. One does not need to develop a capacity for moral and political judgment, since we ought not to be judging one another, either individually or collectively. Think how long it has been since the word "discriminating" was used with a positive connotation, as in "he was a man of discriminating judgment." For us, all discrimination has become "invidious." All judgment has become an imposition. One of the worst things one can say about someone today is that he is "judgmental." (At the same time, there is something of a popular backlash against this laxity, visible in the popularity of Judge Judy, Dr. Laura, and other shoot-from-the-hip types.)

In the classroom, the prevailing notion of toleration and "respect" is at odds with the intellectual enterprise. One of the categories on Loyola's standard course-evaluation form reads: "showed genuine respect for students." I have had students mark me as deficient on grounds that I required them to explain and justify their statements. They arrive believing that a challenging question directed at their stated view indicates disrespect. Since "everybody's entitled to his opinion," and no one is entitled to judge or discriminate among opinions, class discussion ought simply to be a matter of each person stating his view and leaving it at that. They have no conception of dialogue as a logical process, a joint endeavor subject to the arbitrament of reason, a working-through-speech-towards-the-truth. It comes as news to them that being taken seriously as an interlocutor—being listened to, questioned, and argued with—might be a form of "genuine respect." I have found that I must be much more explicit about my pedagogical methods than my teachers ever were.

Of course, students have heard the liberal-arts boilerplate about "learning to think critically." The problem is that for

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many of them critical thinking seems to mean the cursory dismissal of others' arguments by espying in them that dread quality of "partisanship." If you can show that someone else is trying to persuade others, and mustering arguments to that end, you can then dismiss their arguments, because, after all, they only brought them forward with the illegitimate aim of persuading others. Attempts at persuasion are an imposition. Having so handily discounted any view they disagree with, they believe their own view stands firm, unassisted by any arguments on its behalf. In denouncing the partisanship of others, they are oblivious to their own. The charge of partisanship is used to fend off the challenge set by an opposing opinion. With students, this seems to be just a reflex of their complacency. Among our partisan politicians, the charge of partisanship is deployed much more self-consciously, and much more culpably. Both intellectual and political discourse are enfeebled by this refusal to start where one ought to start: with a consideration of the rightness or wrongness of the argument.

Perpetuation

Let me return to the question with which I began: What would it mean to educate with a view to the perpetuation of our political institutions? For an answer, one can't do better than offer Lincoln, for this was the theme of his life's work—a theme he first raised in the Lyceum Address of 1838. Lincoln believed that any threat to America would come from within, and that it would stem from a failure of self-understanding. "If destruction be our lot," Lincoln said, "we must ourselves be its author and finisher. As a nation of freemen, we must live through all time, or die by suicide." Lincoln already saw signs of the impending suicide of self-government in the "increasing disregard for law." The worst effect of this mobocratic spirit was to corrode the attachment of the people to their government. This is a diagnosis that sounds eerily familiar. In the wake of events such as the Oklahoma City bombing and the Littleton school massacre, every American knows about violence and terror in the heartland. But our most astute political observers have long known that danger lurked in the heartland—not just in the actions of the lunatic

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fringe but, more significantly, in the alienation of political affection experienced by ordinary men and women. In order to refasten the people's attachment to their government (and perhaps refashion it as well), Lincoln called upon his countrymen to "Let [reverence for the laws] become the *political religion* of the nation."

Jefferson, who had likewise worried about democratic degeneracy, offered a very different, antireverential solution. What Jefferson recommended was a kind of permanent revolution—manifest, for example, in his suggestion that all laws, including the Constitution itself, have a life-span of 20 years, thus forcing each generation to assume the galvanizing task of founding. According to him, "The dead have no rights. They are nothing.... Each generation is as independent of the one preceding, as that was of all which had gone before."

While Jefferson seems to side wholly with transformation, Lincoln seems to side wholly with tradition. The opening remarks of the Lyceum Address are a panegyric on the founding generation. Theirs was the struggle; we are but epigones whose sole remaining task is the transmission of their blessed legacy. However, once the psalmodizing is over, the task of transmission begins to look more difficult. It turns out that "the political edifice of liberty and equal rights" erected by our forefathers has never really been a freestanding structure; "it had," Lincoln says, "many props to support it." Here is how he explains it:

> I mean the powerful influence which the interesting scenes of the revolution had upon the *passions* of the people as distinguished from their judgment. By this influence, the jealousy, envy, avarice, incident to our nature, and so common to a state of peace, prosperity, and conscious strength, were, for the time, in a great measure smothered and rendered inactive; while the deep rooted principles of *hate*, and the powerful motive of *revenge*, instead of being turned against each other, were directed exclusively against the British nation. And thus, from the force of circumstances, the basest principles of our nature, were either made to lie dormant, or to become the active agents in the advancement of the noblest of causes.... But this state of feeling *must fade, is fading, has faded*, with the circumstances that produced it.... [The scenes of the revolution] *were* the pillars of the temple of liberty; and now, that they have crumbled away, that temple must fall, unless we ... supply their places with other

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> pillars, hewn from the solid quarry of sober reason. Passion has helped us; but can do so no more. It will in future be our enemy. Reason, cold, calculating, unimpassioned reason, must furnish all the materials for our future support and defence.

According to Lincoln, assertions of independence can allow passion a helpful role, but those same passions are harmful to the development of the habit of independence. Because self-government, both in the individual and in the collective, depends upon the sovereignty of reason, the "capability of a people to govern themselves" is still an undemonstrated proposition. The temple of liberty, though aided in its construction by a scaffolding of passion, must be built from the rock of reason.

Tradition and transformation

America today finds itself in precisely this circumstance of faded patriotism: It cannot summon up the scenes of the Revolution, the scenes of the Civil War, the scenes of World War II and the subsequent Cold War. Its unruly passions will not be fortuitously ordered in the manner of previous generations. The old pillars have rotted, done in by time, with assistance from the termites of materialism, feminism, multiculturalism, and postmodernism. New pillars must be designed. But how?

There is no one responsible for a greater transformation of our moral and political life than Abraham Lincoln; at the same time, there is no one more intransigent in his devotion to the founding principles, the founding documents, and indeed every jot and tittle of the law of the land. That is a paradox worth pondering. To me, it suggests something quite interesting: the possibility of transformation proceeding out of the tradition itself, and precisely because of utter fidelity to it. In seeking to carry out his task of perpetuation, Lincoln saw that the founding, like all beginnings, had been unable to maintain its full momentum and direction. The only conceivable way to restore its force was to draw once again more deeply than ever from the original source. In other words, the endurance of the republic depends on a kind of repetition of its emergence, hence Lincoln's call for new pillars of liberty in the Lyceum Address, and ultimately his call for "a new birth of freedom" in the Gettysburg Address.

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My modest suggestion is that the young be schooled in the principles of the Declaration and Constitution and encouraged to undertake an intensive dialogue, both philosophic and political, with the dead. The dead may not have rights, but they may have been right. If we begin by asking whether they were right or not, our answer to that question might inform our stance toward the present and guide us toward renewed public engagement. It will enable us to do what Václav Havel calls "embracing what one is given to do in one's time and place."

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What's happening in business schools?

MARIANNE M. JENNINGS

OVER the past two years, stories of questionable—at times criminal—business activity have dominated the business press: Cendant's creative earnings, Archer Daniels Midland's price-fixing, Bankers Trust's leveraged derivatives and use of customer funds, and Long-Term Capital's high-risk bets with others' funds, to name a few. Rite-Aid and Wal-Mart have been profiled for their peculiar charge-back policies that leave their suppliers confused and temporarily or permanently underpaid. Sears Roebuck's disregard for bankruptcy laws, debtors' rights, and creditor priorities led to a $63 million fine—the largest in the history of U.S. bankruptcy law.

The sheer magnitude of the dollars and number of missteps would seem to prompt the question: What's going on in business? And while business misconduct gallops along at a Triple Crown pace, business academicians stand on the sidelines, wringing their hands and clicking their tongues in exasperation at the inherent wickedness of business. Instead of helping

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to train ethical businessmen, business faculty attack the very foundations of business and the capitalist system. Many business students abandon business altogether, changing their majors to liberal arts.

Business in the academy has never quite overcome its poor reputation. That liberal-arts schools regarded business with disdain was not surprising. But business schools at the undergraduate level were able to chug along, turning out successful majors, bringing in private dollars, and even attracting attention with scholarly research in economics and finance. For a long time, they were tolerated as tacky but harmless. Yet it was unlikely they would remain untainted by the rise of multiculturalism, political correctness, radical feminism, and postmodernism on the nation's college campuses. Indeed, these anticapitalist notions have penetrated the hearts and minds of business students and the fields of debit, credit, risk, and macroeconomics. The result has been an ongoing transformation of the business curriculum with the full participation and blessing of business students.

The consequence of this reformation in the curriculum has been a disconnect between what business students should know and what business students are actually taught. The fundamental principles of capitalism are derided, and students emerge from business schools with odd notions about everything from business ethics to the role of business in society. These trends in the curriculum may have, in part, contributed to the business malpractice noted in my opening paragraphs. Business students are offered little of intellectual or moral substance under the current curriculum—no texts or programs that help them understand the role of business in society or their personal role in its success as managers with integrity.

Business with a new face

The American Assembly of Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) is the national accrediting body for college and university business schools. Trying to escape their embarrassing reputation of being the least scholarly units on campus, business schools created this body to be sure that business-school degrees carried sufficient depth and rigor.

The AACSB then regulated business schools with a series

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of incomprehensible self-study guides on everything from faculty recruitment and retention to student diversity to mission statements to muddled curricula. When one thinks of business-school subject areas, the topics of accounting, finance, management, marketing, and business law come to mind. But the Preamble to the AACSB guidelines sets a different tone. Businesses, it says, face four significant challenges: globalization, conflicting values, changing technology in products and processes, and demographic diversity among the employees and customers.

The Preamble goes on to add, "In this environment, management education must prepare students to contribute to their organizations and the larger society and to grow personally and professionally throughout their careers." The AACSB guidelines then require all business schools to have a holy grail quest with a "clear and published mission that is subjected to periodic review and revised as needed." The guidelines offer advice on this pilgrimage only to the extent of adding that the mission statement must be derived after "the viewpoints of various constituencies have been considered," and must emphasize "the achievement of high quality as one of its educational objectives." High quality is achieved, according to the AACSB, through specific requirements in the areas of faculty, curriculum, instructional methods, students, and intellectual contributions.

Diversity not excellence

The AACSB standard for the recruitment of faculty members includes the following: "The school should demonstrate continuous efforts to achieve demographic diversity in its faculty." The words "merit" or "scholarship" are omitted in the faculty-selection criteria in favor of "diversity."

Both undergraduate and MBA programs in AACSB schools of business must emphasize the influence and ethical aspects of political, social, legal, regulatory, environmental, and technological issues, and the impact of demographic diversity on organizations. Only as a subset of these areas do the guidelines mention accounting, behavioral science, economics, mathematics, and statistics. Only at the MBA level are the topics of financial reporting, market analysis, and human behavior

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in organizations mentioned. The MBA curriculum is allowed to cover the production and distribution of goods and services in the real world. But the undergraduate business degree looks like a de facto liberal-arts degree with math and statistics slipped in for window dressing.

The AACSB curricula requirements spawned numerous academic journal articles on the subject. Interestingly, in neither the guidelines nor any of the scholarly articles on the business-school curriculum is business law mentioned. Despite the fact that all of the business headlines noted earlier involved legal missteps by company executives, the term "business law" does not appear in the AACSB curriculum guidelines.

The AACSB mandates for quality instruction in business schools are reflected in two words, "innovation" and "creativity." But conspicuously absent is the word "results." There is advocacy for student-driven instructional methods, and the literature on instruction in business schools focuses on cooperative learning, team teaching, portfolios, and "critical thinking." Articles on classroom instruction and innovation in teaching methods feature the words "diversity," "stakeholders," "paradigm," "active learning," "critical thinking," and "grounded learning." The latter is defined as "learning inductively from interactive involvement with the phenomenon being studied." There is no mention, however, of studying the reactions of hostile shareholders when poor earnings are announced. Instead, "grounded learning" exercises emphasize role playing in which racial and gender biases are explored through confrontational dialogues. One article on business-school instructional methods bemoaned the lack of women in Harvard Business School case studies. Apparently, the author forgot that one of the appeals of the business-school case method has been that the cases selected are real. The author proposed going back and rewriting the cases to include a proportionate number of female protagonists.

The guidelines and scholarship on learning in business schools emphasize *student* input and feedback. The students are once again in charge, and the power they wield is especially great because of the competition among business schools for the coveted rankings given by both *Business Week* and

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U.S. News & World Report. This causes the deans of faculty to ease grading standards and lighten student work loads.

Under AACSB guidelines, students are recruited no differently from faculty: "The school should demonstrate continuous efforts to achieve demographic diversity in its student enrollment." Not quality, not qualification, but diversity in enrollment is what counts.

That's scholarship?

Under standards for scholarship, the AACSB emphasizes research that is scrutinized "by academic peers or practitioners." In fact, the practitioners are forgotten, and it is the peers who are performing the scrutiny, for even a cursory look at business scholarship places practitioners squarely in the corner of the irrelevant. Peter Drucker, a prolific and respected writer and thinker in the field of management, is on the faculty of Claremont and has given that institution its unique standing. The work of its 13 faculty members is mentioned more in business publications than the work of the 200 plus faculty members of the Harvard Business School. Despite this achievement, one professor, presenting the typical view of his peers, said of Drucker's work: "He's not a scholar. He's a journalist." In other words, if it's useful, it doesn't count as scholarship.

A look at what does count for intellectual contribution is entertaining. An academic finance journal has this to say for the enlightenment of business:

> The results in this paper strongly support the hypothesis that systematic changes in stock prices have not been fully justified by economically pertinent news, despite the possible influence of market imperfections such as tax and institutional constraints. The discovery that the weather in New York City has a long history of significant correlations with major stock indexes supports the view that investor psychology influences asset prices.

There you have it. For this we needed a paper?

Research in business states the obvious in tabular form and *voila!* it's called scholarship. For example, one marketing journal article, titled "The Effect of Effort on Sales Performance and Job Satisfaction," concluded that effort alone does not always

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produce sales. Still another article in the same issue concluded that customers who wait for service give companies lower evaluations in customer-service surveys.

Perhaps the strongest evidence of bias against the market economy is to be found in the scholarship and writing on business ethics, and most particularly, in the notion of stakeholder theory. This theory holds that those who do not necessarily own the business should still have a say in how the business behaves. Those listed as stakeholders are customers, employees, communities, creditors—and even competitors.

In the wide-ranging field of business ethics, largely grounded in environmentalism, there are even nonhuman stakeholders, as noted by Mark Starik in his article, "Should Trees Have Managerial Standing?" featured in the *Journal of Business Ethics*. Another business professor, Peter Singer, groups animals as stakeholders, for "the interests of the dog get the same consideration as those of the human, and the loss to the dog is not discounted because the dog is not a member of our species."

The AACSB, with all of its guidelines, has redefined business-school education, admissions, faculty recruitment, and scholarship to follow the template covering the rest of the university campus. However, despite the radical reforms mandated by the AACSB, the greatest threat to business schools, perhaps, rests with the faculty's unwillingness to acknowledge the role of business in a free society and a resistance on the part of students to examine this role.

The closing of the business-school mind

Formerly, teaching ethics to business students was a matter of guiding them through the importance of honesty and fairness in the capitalist system. Over the years, however, the generic left-wing instincts of the academy have infiltrated the minds of business students. Not only has business ethics become a tough sell, business itself has too. In my courses on law and ethics, taught at the MBA level, I have used a combination of systems analysis, business history, and the case-study method to cover the role of ethics in capitalism. Within the context of this approach, some interesting student attitudes about business emerge through discussions and in their pa-

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pers. "Most people in business are in it for money," wrote one student, contemptuously. "Capitalism is the source of all poverty," wrote another. It is always an arduous task to teach business to those who hate capitalism; it seems that an MBA may not be their best career path.

There is a perplexing disdain among these business students for business and a cynical attitude about their decision to pursue it as a career. Feeling very much as if they have sold their souls by going into business in the first place, they are resigned to, and comfortable with, myriad forms of immoral conduct as a routine part of business. It's as if they have concluded: If you are going to rob a Seven-Eleven convenience store, what difference does it make if you get a speeding ticket during the getaway? My students, while viewing themselves as morally superior because of their disdain for capitalism, have a great deal of difficulty comprehending the simple value of not stealing. When a student asked me if I would embezzle a million dollars to save my dying mother, I answered "No," without equivocation or hesitation. He then responded, "You're heartless. No wonder I'm getting a 'C' in this class."

Universal rules perplex my business students, who are, at bottom, moral relativists. Among Americans in the 18 to 34 age group, 79 percent believe that there are no absolute standards in ethics. A recent survey of MBAs found that 73 percent would hire a competitor's employee to obtain trade secrets. The same survey found that only 60 percent of convicts would. One student's response when asked if he would leave a note if he hit a parked car in a parking lot was, "You mean a note with my name?"

A little Aristotle, some Friedman economics, a bit of Peter Drucker's "above all do no harm," and a dash of Plato have little impact on their values, for they resent being subjected to the "white male perspective on ethics." I was unaware that the notions of honesty and trust were tools of oppression or that they depended on one's race or gender. This is the Rosa Parks generation, schooled in conscientious objection and immune to rules. They see insider trading as an occasion for moral outrage and rebellion against the evils of corporate America. Raised entirely in the post-Rachel Carson era, they

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know only the virtue of mass transit and the evils of fossil fuels. They are deeply offended by the levels of executive pay, deplore stock options, and believe that a company's gay-rights position is a litmus test for its morality. They were but children during the Reagan years, but they recite the Gordon Gekko creed of "Greed is good" with great familiarity and believe business spawned the homeless. They equate ethics not with right or wrong but with correct views on social and political issues.

They have the yearnings of the liberal heart and the values of Dick Morris. That businesses cheat is a given for them and they are cynically resigned to participation. Such is the result of this generation's students schooled amidst a curriculum and academy aligned against the evils of capitalism and comfortable avoiding the judgmentalism of right versus wrong.

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Reducing poverty, not inequality

MARTIN FELDSTEIN

ACCORDING to official statistics, the distribution of income has become increasingly unequal during the past two decades. A common reaction in the popular press, in political debate, and in academic discussions is to regard the increased inequality as a problem that demands new redistributive policies. I disagree. I believe that inequality as such is not a problem and that it would be wrong to design policies to reduce it. What policy should address is not inequality but poverty.

The difference is not just semantics. It is about how we should think about the rise in incomes at the upper end of the income distribution. Imagine the following: Later today, a small magic bird appears and gives each *Public Interest* subscriber $1,000. We would all think that this is a good thing. And yet, since *Public Interest* subscribers undoubtedly have above average incomes, that would also increase inequality in the nation. I think it would be wrong to consider those $1,000 windfalls morally suspect.

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Pareto principle vs. Gini coefficient

When professional economists think about economic policies, they generally start with the principle that a change is good if it makes someone better off without making anyone else worse off. That idea, first suggested by the Italian economist Vilfredo Pareto, is referred to as the Pareto principle. I find it hard to see how one could disagree with such a principle, which is why it is the widely accepted foundation for the evaluation of economic policies.

Not all policies can be evaluated in reference to the Pareto principle. There are policies that make some people better off while making others worse off. The desirability of such a policy depends on how much the gainers gain, how much the losers lose, and the initial income and circumstances of the individuals involved. But that difficult evaluation is not my concern here. I am interested only in evaluating changes that increase the incomes of high-income individuals without decreasing the incomes of others. Such a change clearly satisfies the common-sense Pareto principle: It is good because it makes some people better off without making anyone else worse off. I think such a change should be regarded as good even though it increases inequality.

Not everyone will agree with me. Some see inequality as so intolerable that they regard increasing the income of the wealthy as a "bad thing," even if that increased income does not come at anyone else's expense. Such an individual, whom I would describe as a "spiteful egalitarian," might try to reconcile this with the Pareto principle by saying, "It makes me worse off to see the rich getting richer. So if a rich man gets $1,000, he is better off and I am worse off. I don't have fewer material goods, but I have the extra pain of living in a more unequal world." I reject such arguments and stick to the basic interpretation of the Pareto principle that if the material well-being of some individuals increases with no decrease in the material well-being of others, that is a good thing even if it implies an increase in measured inequality.

I would note that one can reject spiteful egalitarianism and still favor redistributive policies and tax progressivity. Such redistributive policies reflect an assumption that the social value of incremental income (in economic terminology, the

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social marginal utility of income) declines as income rises—i.e., that an extra $100 of income means less to a millionaire than to someone whose income is $10,000. Of course, many economists reject such comparisons on the grounds that there is no way to compare how much pleasure two different individuals get from money or from the goods that money buys. But analyses that conclude that all increases in inequality are bad imply something much stronger: that the social value of incremental income to a rich person is actually negative.

More formally, economists and other policy analysts often use the "Gini Coefficient" as a measure of income inequality.[1] The Gini Coefficient measures the concentration of incomes in the nation, with a higher Gini Coefficient value implying more concentration. A feature of the Gini Coefficient is that an increase in the incomes of the rich with no change in the incomes of others will raise the Gini Coefficient. The common procedure of regarding a higher Gini coefficient as a deterioration of the national condition is equivalent to treating the social marginal utility of high incomes as negative—i.e., that something bad has occurred when the well to do become better off.

In rejecting the criticism of inequality *per se,* and in asserting that higher incomes of the well off are a good thing, I am not referring to the functional arguments that some have offered in defense of inequality. Such analysts argue that an unequal distribution of income may contribute to general economic growth, and therefore to the poor's standard of living, by increasing the national saving rate. Alternatively, they contend that inequality is a reflection of Schumpeterian innovation, which eventually helps most, if not all, individuals in the economy. I am also not defending high incomes because the affluent support charitable causes or "high culture." All of this may be true, and even convincing to someone who doesn't care about the well-being of the wealthy or who gives negative weight to their increased well-being. But I am not relying on such arguments here, because I want to stress that there is nothing wrong with an increase in the well-being of the wealthy

[1] See, for example, the papers discussed at the Federal Reserve conference, "Income Inquality: Issues and Policy Options" (Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City, 1998), at which an earlier version of the current essay was presented.

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or with an increase in inequality that results from a rise in high incomes.

The rich get richer

There has been a relatively greater increase in higher incomes in recent years in the United States and in some other countries. Some part of the rise in top incomes reflects the fact that the cut in top marginal tax rates in 1986 caused high-income taxpayers to shift the form of their compensation to taxable cash from fringe benefits and other unobservable forms of compensation. But there have also been real increases in the pretax incomes at the top. It is important to understand why.

The increase in higher incomes has been the result of four principal factors. First, there are now more individuals with advanced education and enhanced marketable skills, and market forces reward these high skills relatively more than they did in the past. Thus individuals have a strong incentive to acquire these skills and to select occupations in which such skills are rewarded. Second, entrepreneurial activities are on the rise. The creation and growth of new businesses has been an important source of the larger number of individuals with high incomes and significant wealth.

Third, high-wage individuals work increasingly long hours. We all know about investment bankers, lawyers, and other highly paid professionals who are now working 70 or more hours a week, twice the weekly hours of a typical employee. Dora Costa, an economic historian at MIT, has recently reported that this observation is part of a more general trend toward longer working hours for higher paid employees, a reversal of the earlier tendency of those with lower wages to work longer hours. The result: measured inequality has increased.

Finally, declines in the cost of capital, reflecting an improved fiscal outlook and perhaps a decrease in perceived financial risk as a result of lower inflation, translate into higher stock and bond prices, an additional source of increased wealth for those with higher incomes. Each of these four sources of higher incomes for those at the upper end of the distribution is, I would argue, a good thing in itself. They add to the

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income or wealth of those individuals without reducing the incomes and wealth of others.

Mismeasuring poverty

The real problem on which national policy should focus then is not inequality but poverty. I have in mind the incomes of those in the bottom decile or quintile of the income distribution. After discussing the problems of measuring poverty, I will consider three possible sources of poverty—unemployment, a lack of earnings ability, and individual choice—and what can be done about them.

Of course, measuring the incomes of the lowest income group is not a simple task. Cash income overestimates the number of the poor. A broader measure that includes in-kind benefits like health care and housing suggests much less poverty. There is also a problem in classifying someone as poor if his income is only temporarily low.

More generally, sociologists who have actually studied the poor directly and spoken with them about their living conditions (a research method that economists use too little) have been puzzled by how the poor could live on so little income. Those who have gained the confidence of the poor discover the answer: the underground economy. The true incomes of many of those with very low measured incomes are actually higher than the data indicate. Such individuals do not report their total income since doing so might reduce their eligibility for cash and in-kind transfers.

This is a major problem for studies of the incomes of the poor. Careful studies of income distribution are most reliable when they look at the wage distribution of the middle classes, an unfortunate fact since the most interesting questions are about the very poor and the very rich, for whom data are simply not very good.

A separate issue that plagues attempts to measure trends in poverty and in income levels more generally is the difficulty of measuring changes in the cost of living. A growing body of research suggests that the consumer price index (CPI) and related official measures overstate the rise in the true cost of living and, therefore, understate the rise in real personal incomes. Even if the bias in the CPI is as little as 1 percent a

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year, the cumulative effect over two decades is to understate the growth of real incomes by more than 20 percent.

These measurement difficulties should make us cautious about attempting to assess changes in the extent of poverty over time. Nevertheless, poverty today is a real and serious problem in the United States and other countries. I will thus consider three sources of poverty and the policies that might be directed to counter them.

Unemployment and poverty

There exists a small, but serious, amount of very long-term unemployment in the United States that creates poverty and hardship. Its extent goes beyond the measured amount of long-term unemployment since most individuals who have been out of work for considerable periods of time in the United States are classified as "not in the labor force" rather than unemployed. But, although this long-term nonemployment is a problem and a source of poverty, it is not a cyclical problem that is amenable to expansionary monetary or fiscal policy.

Current long-term unemployment is very different from the unemployment of the Great Depression when a large fraction of the labor force was unemployed and out of work for a year or longer. The current long-term unemployment is also very different from the cyclical unemployment that we see now in the United States. Most cyclical unemployment spells are short, ending in less than 10 weeks. During such spells of unemployment, the decline in consumption is very small. Unemployment insurance generally replaces more than half of the lost net income of those who receive benefits, and the earnings of second earners in the household of the unemployed help to stabilize total household income. While the unemployed may not have access to formal lines of credit, they are often able to defer payments during part or all of their unemployment spells.

The situation is, of course, different in Europe where unemployment rates tend to rise during recessions but not to fall during a recovery. Cyclical unemployment there becomes long-term unemployment because of the adverse incentives in the European system of unemployment benefits and welfare payments.

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Reform of the American unemployment system in the 1980s led to a decline in the rate of unemployment. One important aspect of those reforms was subjecting unemployment benefits to the personal income tax, a reform that obviously did not affect the poor (who do not pay income tax). However, this measure did reduce the very high replacement rates that previously made it possible for some individuals in higher-income households to have more net income by being unemployed than by working.

Lack of earning ability

The most commonly recognized reason for poverty in the United States is the inability of poor individuals to earn more than a very low hourly wage. This low earnings ability is often attributed to inadequate schooling or training.

It is clear that inadequate schooling can limit an individual's earning ability and that the obvious remedy is more or better schooling. Many economists and educators who are studying how to improve our educational system have concluded that decentralization and competition are essential. Research by Larry Katz and Claudia Goldin of Harvard shows that the historic spread of high-school education and vocational education in the United States reflected decisions of local governments rather than the actions of the states or federal government. Research by Caroline Hoxby and others shows that the quality of local public education today improves (as measured by graduation rates, continued education, post-school wages, etc.) where competition flourishes due to a larger number of school districts or a greater availability of nonpublic (typically parochial) education. The importance of competition has increased interest in vouchers to promote individual choice.

A second reason for low earnings ability is inadequate training. Experience suggests that on-the-job training is best. The German system of formalized apprenticeships appears to allow Germany to escape the high youth-unemployment rates that plague much of Europe; the system may also reduce poverty in later years. In the United States, in contrast, minimum-wage legislation limits the ability of individuals with low skills, low education, and low ability to obtain on-the-job training. Although someone who comes to a job with good ability and

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skills can both earn the minimum wage or more and also obtain additional skills through on-the-job training, an employer cannot afford to pay the minimum wage and provide training to those with the lowest skills.

The evidence on government-sponsored training programs for the middle-aged unemployed is very discouraging. For women, participation in training programs raises employment and wages by more than the cost of the training, but the impact on employment and poverty for the trainees is very small. For men, the results are even worse: The gains from training are less than the costs.

The problem of low human capital as a source of poverty is not just a matter of schooling and training but also low cognitive ability. As I read the evidence, while variations in cognitive ability (IQ) close to the mean score do not have much impact on individuals' wage rates, individuals with extremely low levels of cognitive ability (IQ levels below 80) have a very hard time earning a decent wage rate. This is not a fashionable view. Americans like to think that all men and women are quite literally created equal and that education can therefore solve the problem of low human capital and low earnings. Unfortunately, however, very low cognitive ability is likely to be a serious cause of poverty that cannot be remedied by education and training. Only when this is accepted will it be possible to develop appropriate new policies.

Finally, there are those for whom low earnings ability reflects pathologically dysfunctional life styles—drug abuse, alcoholism, and mental illness. Policies that deal with these specific problems, if they are successful, will do much to reduce human suffering as well as to alleviate poverty.

The role of individual choice

Not all poverty can be attributed to involuntary unemployment or to the lack of earning ability. Individual choices, rational or irrational, can lead to poverty. Some individuals who are in poverty may be making considered choices. For example, some individuals may choose leisure (not working or working very little) over cash income even though this leaves them poorer than they otherwise would be. Choosing not to work may be an increasingly important source of poverty. Over

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time, the standard of living that is possible without working has increased for some segments of the population as a result of the rise in the real value of cash and in-kind welfare benefits. Often the real value of these welfare benefits has increased more rapidly than the real value of wages available to low-skilled workers, increasing the likelihood that the appeal of such benefits would exceed the attractiveness of work. This is reinforced to the extent that transfer rules reduce the incentive to work. Reducing such voluntary poverty requires reexamining the structure of welfare programs.

Not all individual choice is properly described as "considered" or "rational," and some individuals may choose poverty in error. In other words, they may think that they are making a rational decision (what economists would call a "utility maximizing" decision) when in fact their facts are wrong. Some of those individuals may think that they will not like work (or the combination of work and the money that it brings) as much as they currently like staying at home but would discover the opposite if they went to work. Moreover, these individuals may not recognize that they will advance in their jobs, shifting over time to more appealing work or at least to higher incomes. A policy of "tough love" that forces such individuals to enter the world of work for an extended period of time may be the best way to overcome this problem.

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The monochrome society

AMITAI ETZIONI

VARIOUS demographers and social scientists have been predicting for years that the end of the white majority in the United States is near, and that there will be a majority of minorities. The issue has moved to the center of American political discourse: CNN has broadcasted a special program on the subject; President Clinton has called attention to it in his national dialogue on race relations; and numerous books and articles in recent years have addressed America's changing demography from vastly different—and frequently antagonistic—perspectives.

Some have reacted to the expected demise of the white majority with alarm or distress. Dale Maharidge, author of *The Coming White Minority: California's Eruptions and America's Future*, claims that by the year 2000, California's population will be less than 50 percent white. As he explains, "'Minorities' will be in the majority, a precursor to the 2050 state of racial composition nationwide, when the nation will be almost half nonwhite." According to Maharidge, "whites

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are scared," especially in California:

> The depth of white fear is underestimated and misunderstood by progressive thinkers and the media. Whites dread the unknown and not-so-distant tomorrow when a statistical turning point will be reached that could have very bad consequences for them. They fear the change that seems to be transforming their state into something different from the rest of the United States. They fear losing not only their jobs but also their culture. Some feel that California will become a version of South Africa, in which whites will lose power when minorities are the majority.

Fearing the "browning" of America, many whites have already formed residential islands surrounded by vast ethnic communities, foreshadowing, Maharidge claims, what the rest of America might become. Whites and nonwhites alike recently passed the anti-immigrant Proposition 187, which Maharidge links to these same fears about the end of the white majority. "There is ample evidence," he concludes, "that white tension could escalate."

In contrast, John Isbister, a professor of economics at the University of California at Santa Cruz, asks us to ponder whether America is too white. He contends that the decline in the white proportion of the population is a healthy development for the country, because it will gradually replace a majority-minority confrontation with interactions between groups of more equal size and influence. He further notes that "the principal case for a falling white proportion is simply this: it will be easier for us to transform a society of hostility and oppression into one of cooperation if we are dealing not with a majority versus several small minorities, but with groups of roughly equivalent size."

One people

As I see it, both views, that of alarm and celebration, are fundamentally wrong because these positions are implicitly and inadvertently racist: They assume that people's pigmentation or other racial attributes determine their opinions, values, and votes. In fact, very often the opposite is true. America is blessed with an economic and political system, as well as culture and core values, that while far from flawless, are embraced by most Americans of all races and ethnic groups. (To

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save breath, from here on, race is used to encompass ethnicity.) It is a grievous error to suggest that as America's racial mix changes so will its core values. Of course, nobody can predict what people will believe 50 years from now. But it is clear that today the races share the same basic aspirations and principles. Moreover, current trends in attitudes that are concomitant with increases in the proportion of the nonwhite population further support the thesis that while American society may well change, whites and nonwhites will largely change together.

A 1992 survey finds that most black and Hispanic Americans (86 percent and 85 percent, respectively) seek "fair treatment for all, without prejudice or discrimination." One may expect that this principle is of special concern to minorities, but white Americans feel the same way. As a result, the proportion of all Americans who agree with the quoted statement about fairness is 79 percent.

A poll of New York residents shows that the vast majority of respondents consider it very important to teach our common heritage and values. One may expect this statement to reflect a white, majoritarian view. However, minorities endorse this position more strongly than whites: 88 percent of Hispanics and 89 percent of blacks—compared to 70 percent of whites. A nationwide poll finds that equal proportions of blacks and whites, 93 percent, concur that they would vote for a black presidential candidate. Another national poll finds that over 80 percent of all respondents in every category—age, gender, race, location, education, and income—agree with the statement that freedom must be tempered by personal responsibility. Far from favoring a multicultural curriculum, approximately 85 percent of all parents, 83 percent of African-American parents, 89 percent of Hispanic parents, and 88 percent of foreign-born parents agree that "to graduate from high school, students should be required to understand the common history and ideas that tie all Americans together."

Even in response to a deliberately loaded question, a 1997 poll shows that similarities between the races are much larger than differences. Asked, "Will race relations in this country ever get better?" 43 percent of blacks and 60 percent of whites reply in the affirmative. (Pollsters tend to focus on the 17

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percent who strike a different position rather than on the 43 percent who embrace the same one. The difference between 57 percent of blacks and 40 percent of whites who do not believe that race relations are going to get better is also 17 percent.)

Not black and white

While Americans hold widely ranging opinions on *what* should be done about various matters of social policy, people across racial and ethnic categories identify the same issues as important to them and to the country. For instance, in a 1996 survey, whites, African Americans, Latinos, and Asian Americans concurred that education is "the most important issue facing [their] community today." Similarly, more than 80 percent of blacks, Latinos, and whites share the belief that "it is 'extremely important' to spend tax dollars on 'educational opportunities for children.'" In another survey, 54 percent of blacks and 61 percent of whites rank "increased economic opportunity" as the most important goal for blacks. And 97 percent of blacks and 92 percent of whites rate violent crime a "very serious or most serious problem."

Other problems that trouble America's communities highlight points of convergence among members of various racial and ethnic groups. "Between 80 and 90 percent of black, white, and 'other' Americans agree that it is 'extremely important' to spend tax dollars on 'reducing crime' and 'reducing illegal drug use' among youth." In addition, some shared public-policy preferences emerge. Among whites, African Americans, Latinos, and Asian Americans surveyed by the *Washington Post*/Kaiser Foundation/Harvard Survey Project, between 75 percent and 82 percent of each group feel "strongly" that Congress should balance the budget. Between 30 percent and 41 percent are convinced that Congress should instate limited tax breaks for business; between 46 percent and 55 percent concur that Congress should cut personal income taxes; between 53 percent and 58 percent agree that Congress should reform Medicare. 67 percent of all parents, 68 percent of African-American parents, 66 percent of Hispanic parents, and 75 percent of foreign-born parents—close to 70 percent of each group—tell *Public Agenda* that the most important thing for public schools

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to do for new immigrant children is "to teach them English as quickly as possible, even if this means they fall behind in other subjects."

All this is not to suggest that there are no significant differences of opinion along racial and ethnic lines, especially when the subject directly concerns race. For instance, many whites and many blacks (although by no means all of either group) take different views of whether O.J. Simpson was guilty. In one survey, 62 percent of whites believed Simpson was guilty, in contrast to 55 percent of African Americans who believed he was not guilty. Likewise, concerning affirmative action, 51 percent of blacks in a 1997 poll "favor programs which give preferential treatment to racial minorities," a much higher percentage than the 21 percent of whites who favor such programs. And a very large difference appears when one examines voting patterns. For instance, in 1998, 55 percent of whites versus 11 percent of African Americans voted for Republican Congressional candidates.

Still, if one considers attitudes toward the basic tenets of the American creed, the majority of blacks accept them. A *Public Perspective* poll from 1998 finds that 54 percent of blacks and 66 percent of whites agree with the following statement: "In the United States today, anyone who works hard enough can make it economically." Most blacks (77 percent) say they prefer equality of opportunity to equality of results (compared to 89 percent of whites). On the question, "Do you see yourself as traditional or old fashioned on things such as sex, morality, family life, and religion, or not," the difference between blacks and whites is only 5 percent, and when asked whether values in America are seriously declining, the difference is down to one point.

A question from an extensive national survey conducted at the University of Virginia by James Davison Hunter and Carl Bowman asks: "How strong would you say the U.S. decline or improvement is in its moral and ethical standards?" Twenty-three percent of blacks and 33 percent of whites said there was a strong decline, but 29 percent of blacks and 24 percent of whites said the standards were holding steady, and 40 percent of blacks and 38 percent of whites said there was a moderate decline. When asked "How strong would you say the

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U.S. decline or improvement is in the area of family life?" 18 percent of blacks and 26 percent of whites said there was a strong decline while 42 percent of blacks and 40 percent of whites saw a moderate decline and 31 percent of blacks and 25 percent of whites said family life was holding steady. Roughly the same percentages of blacks and whites strongly advocate balancing the budget, cutting personal income taxes, reforming the welfare system, and reforming Medicare. Percentages are also nearly even in responses to questions on abortion and marijuana.

Pollsters and commentators tend to play up small differences and downplay large similarities. In most of the figures cited above, the differences among the races are much smaller than the similarities. On most issues, there are no findings that could be considered, even by a farfetched interpretation, to show a "white" versus a "black" position, nor a single position of any other ethnic group. Race simply does not determine a person's views.

Class trumps race

Most interestingly, differences within a racial group are often larger than those among races. For instance, sociologist Janet Saltzman Chafetz concludes in a recent study that "in any dimension one wishes to examine—income, education, occupation, political and social attitudes, etc.—the range of difference within one race or gender group is almost as great as that between various groups." A 1994 Kansas City study shows that income differences between age groups in a given race are greater than income differences between entire races.

Indeed, though African Americans are the least mainstreamed group in America, the black middle class is growing, and many of its members have adopted life styles and aspirations similar to those of other middle-class Americans and distinct from those of other black Americans. A 1998 *Wall Street Journal* public-opinion poll shows that differences within distinct classes of a single race are greater than differences among those races, on several, though not on all, key issues. Eighty-two percent of middle-class whites and 70 percent of non-middle-class whites report satisfaction with their personal finances (a disparity of 12 percent), while 74 percent of middle-class blacks

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and 56 percent of non-middle-class blacks report such satisfaction (a difference of 18 percent). The differences, 12 percent and 18 percent respectively, are higher than the differences in opinion between the races (an 8 percent difference between middle-class whites and blacks, and a 14 percent difference between non-middle-class whites and blacks).

On numerous issues, the differences within various minority groups are as big or bigger than those between these groups and "Anglo" Americans. For instance, while fewer Cuban Americans agree with the statement that U.S. citizens should be hired over noncitizens than Anglos (42 percent of Cubans compared to 51 percent of Anglos), other Hispanic groups agree more strongly with the statement than Anglos (55 percent of Puerto Ricans and 54 percent of Mexican Americans). Quotas for jobs and college admissions are favored only by a minority of any of these four groups, but Cubans differ from Mexicans and Puerto Ricans more (by 14 percent) than from Anglos (by 12 percent).

The fact that various minorities do not share a uniform view, which could lead them to march lock-step with other minorities to a new "multicultural" America (as some on the left fantasize), is also reflected in elections. Cuban Americans tend to vote Republican while other Americans of Hispanic origin are more likely to vote Democratic. Americans of Asian origin cannot be counted on to vote one way or another. First-generation Vietnamese Americans tend to be strong anti-Communists and favor the Republican party, while older Japanese and Chinese Americans are more often Democrats, and Filipino Americans are more or less equally divided between the parties. Of the Filipino Americans registered to vote, 40 percent list themselves as Democrats, 38 percent as Republicans, and 17 percent as independent.

I am not suggesting that race makes no difference in a person's position, feelings, or thinking. One can find polls, especially in response to single questions, that show a strong racial influence. However, race does not *determine* a person's response, and often, on the most important matters, Americans of different racial backgrounds share many convictions, hopes, and goals—even in recent years, as we see the beginning of the decline of the white majority.

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The social construction of race

Many social scientists call into question the very category of race drawn on by those who foresee increasing racial diversity and conflict. Alain Corcos, author of several books on genetics, race, and racism, notes that "race" has no single definition.

> Race is a slippery word because it is a biological term, but we use it every day as a social term.... Social, political, and religious views are added to what are seen as biological differences.... Race also has been equated with national origin... with religion... with language.

The different definitions of race indicate that it is not a very reliable way to categorize human beings. Even anthropological and genetic definitions of race prove inadequate, because while each describes divisions among the human population, each fails to provide reliable criteria for making such divisions. As Corcos notes, such definitions "do not tell us how large divisions between populations must be in order to label them races, nor do they tell us how many there are." They are, he notes, "all matters of choice for the classifier."

Corcos also notes that strict biological divisions by race do not hold up. "Geographical and social barriers have never been great enough to prevent members of one population from breeding with members of another. Therefore, any characteristic which may have arisen in one population at one time will be transferred later to other populations through mating." Corcos further chronicles the failure of scientists and social scientists to categorize humans into definite races by such sundry methods as craniology, skin coloring, nose size and shape, and blood type or other genetic markers.

Social anthropologist Audrey Smedley shares these observations. She admits there are apparent biophysical differences among humans but reminds us that "race originated as the imposition of an arbitrary value system on the facts of biological (phenotypic) variations in the human species." She argues that race "was the cultural invention of arbitrary meanings applied to what appeared to be natural divisions within the human species. The meanings had social value but no intrinsic relationship to the biological diversity itself."

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In other words, at first it may seem obvious that there are black, brown, yellow, and white people. But upon closer examination, we realize that there are great differences within each group, even if we choose to focus on, for example, skin color rather than on, say, manners. And these differences do not perfectly correlate with one another. That is, not all persons with darker skin are necessarily short (or tall), and so on. Race, which has been magnified in recent decades by identity politics, is but one imprecise social category, one that does not determine human conduct any more than numerous other social attributes, and often to a much lesser extent.

"Asian Americans" and "Latinos"

Such social groupings as "Asian American" or "Latino" are really statistical artifacts reflecting the way social data are coded and reported. Many ethnic leaders favor these labels, and the media finds them a convenient shorthand. Most so-called "Asian Americans" do not see themselves as such, and many resent being labeled this way. Many Japanese Americans do not feel a particular affinity to Filipino or Pakistani Americans—or even to Korean Americans. And the feeling is reciprocal. As Paul Watanabe, an expert on Asian Americans and himself an American of Japanese descent, puts it: "There's this concept that all Asians are alike, that they have the same history, the same language, the same background. Nothing could be more incorrect."

The same holds for so-called Latinos, including three of my sons. Hispanic Americans trace their origins to many different countries and cultures. According to Eduardo Diaz, a social service administrator, "There is no place called Hispanica. I think it's degrading to be called something that doesn't exist." Many Americans from Central America think of themselves as "mestizo," a term that refers to a mixture of Indian and European ancestry. Among those surveyed in the National Latino Political Survey in 1989, the greatest number of respondents choose to be labeled by their country of origin, as opposed to "pan-ethnic" terms like "hispanic" or "latino."

The significance of such data is that far from seeing a country divided into two or three hardened minority camps, we are witnessing an extension of a traditional American pic-

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ture: Americans of different origins identifying with groups of other Americans from the same country, at least for a while, but not with any large or more lasting group. Far from there being a new coalition of nonwhite minorities soon to gain majority status (something President Clinton points to and Jesse Jackson calls a rainbow, one that contains all colors but white), racial groups differ greatly from each other—and within themselves.

"Nonwhite" states and cities

We can learn about the future, in which nonwhite majorities will prevail, by examining election results in the states and cities in which minorities already comprise the majority. They show that people of a given racial background often do not vote for a candidate of their color—and above all, that nonwhite groups often do not jointly support any one candidate of any one color or racial background. Any suggestion that race or ethnicity determines voting patterns is belied by the facts. For example, Peter Skerry, author of *Mexican Americans: The Ambivalent Minority*, notes that "when first elected to the San Antonio City Council in 1975, [the popular Henry] Cisneros was the candidate of the Anglo establishment and received a higher proportion of Anglo than Mexican votes cast."

We often encounter the future first in California. In a 1991 Los Angeles election for the California State Assembly, Korean-American, Filipino-American, and Japanese-American groups each ran their own candidate, thus splitting the so-called Asian-American vote, not deterred by the fact that they thereby ensured the election of a white candidate.

In some nonwhite-majority cities, the mayor's office is held in succession by whites, blacks, and Hispanics, despite only relatively small changes in the composition of the city population. For instance, in Los Angeles, which is roughly 64 percent nonwhite, Tom Bradley, an African American, served as mayor for 20 years, until 1993, when residents elected Richard Riordan, a white politician. New York City and San Francisco also have alternated in recent years between white and black mayors without witnessing any dramatic changes in the racial and ethnic makeup of those cities.

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New York City, which is approximately 29 percent black, 24 percent Hispanic, and 7 percent Asian and Pacific Islander, elected for mayor the white Ed Koch, then chose the African-American David Dinkins, followed by Rudolph Giuliani. The roughly 55 percent minority city San Francisco was served by three white mayors from 1976 through 1995, but elected the African American Willie Brown in 1996. Dallas, which is about 30 percent black, 21 percent Hispanic, and 2 percent Asian, had no African-American mayor until 1995. Philadelphia, long served by white mayors, elected Wilson Goode to serve between 1984 and 1992, the city's first African-American mayor. Goode was followed by the white Edward Rendell in this city of nearly 40 percent blacks, 6 percent Hispanics, and 3 percent Asians. The fact that cities like D.C. (nearly 66 percent black) and Detroit (nearly 76 percent black) tend to elect black mayors is beside the point, because neither comprises a coalition of minorities but one minority. (Blacks, in some respects, exhibit more racial cohesion than other minorities.)

Virginia, in which whites outnumber minorities significantly (1.5 million minorities and 4.8 million whites), elected a black governor, L. Douglas Wilder, who served from 1989 to 1994. In the rural and conservative Second District of Georgia, a two-thirds white voter majority reelected Sanford D. Bishop, Jr., an African-American Democrat. Washington state, comprising only 4.5 percent Asian Americans, elected Gary Locke in 1996, putting in office the first Asian-American governor in the mainland United States. While one can find counter examples, the ones listed here indicate that the majority of minorities do not necessarily elect people of color, nor does the white majority necessarily elect white officials.

Intermarriage and the rise of "Others"

Last but not least, the figures used by those who project a majority of minorities, or the end of a white majority, are misleading. These figures are based on a simplistic projection of past trends, ignoring the rapidly rising category of racially mixed Americans, the result of the rising number of cross-racial marriages. One out of 12 marriages in 1995 (8.4 percent) were interracial or interethnic marriages. Intermarriages between Asian Americans and whites are particularly common;

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marriages between Hispanic Americans and whites are also rather frequent, while such marriages with African Americans are the least common. About half of third-generation Mexican Americans marry non-Hispanic whites; even higher numbers of Asian Americans do the same.

Intermarriage between black and other Americans is less common but rising. "In 1990, 84 percent of all married black people over the age of 65 were in both-black marriages, but only 53 percent of married blacks under 25 were," according to the Statistical Assessment Service. The Census Bureau finds that over the past 20 years, the number of marriages between blacks and whites has more than quadrupled, increasing from 65,000 in 1970 to 296,000 in 1994.

All together, since 1970, the proportion of marriages among people of different racial or ethnic origin increased by 72 percent. The 1990 Census notes 1.5 million interracial marriages. Some put the number of children of mixed-race parents at 3 million, not including Hispanic mestizos and black Americans who have European or Indian ancestry.

Another indication of the declining salience of race in American society can be gleaned from the fact that in the 1990 Census, 4 percent of Americans (9.8 million) chose to classify themselves as "others," i.e., not members of any particular racial group. Even if the trends already cited do not accelerate and continue only at the present pace, the figures for 2050 may read something like the following: 51 percent white, 14 percent multiracial, 35 percent minorities. Far from dividing the country still further, the rise of the "others," along with the fact that more and more Americans will be of mixed heritage, will serve to blur the racial lines. While there may well be more Americans of non-European origin, a growing number of the American white majority will have an Hispanic daughter- or son-in-law, an Asian stepfather or mother, and a whole rainbow of cousins. If one must find a simple image for the future of America, Tiger Woods seems more appropriate than Louis Farrakahn or David Duke.

Regrettably, identity politics led the U.S. Census Bureau to drop the category of "other" from its 2000 Census. This in turn makes it more difficult for Americans of mixed background, or those who wish to forgo racial labels, to declare

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themselves what I would call "All Americans." Because the Census's categories influence other institutions—for example, colleges and universities which employ quotas—the "other" category of multiracial Americans is spreading more slowly than it otherwise would. In effect, at least 10 million Americans are forced into racial categories they seek to shed or modify, and American society appears more divided along racial lines than it actually is.

Multiculturalism vs. the American creed

In sum, foreseeable changes in America's demography do not imply that the American creed is being, or will be, replaced by something called "multiculturalism." Roberto Suro, author of *Strangers Among Us: How Latino Immigration is Transforming America*, reminds us that we do not need to divest ourselves of plurality in order to achieve harmony.

Americans have never thought of themselves as a single people as, for example, the Germans do. Although white, English-speaking Christians of European ancestry have set most of the norms for American society, there is still no deep sense of a *Volk* (a group that shares a common ancestry and culture and that embodies the national identity.) Ideas, not biology, are what generate oneness and homogeneity in the United States, and so long as the faith in those ideas has remained strong, the country has shown an extraordinary capacity to absorb people of many nationalities.

The American creed has always had room for a pluralism of sub-cultures, of people upholding some of the traditions and values of their countries of origin, from praying to sports to senses of humor. But American pluralism is bound by a shared moral and political framework. Otherwise, America would suffer the kind of ethnic tribalism that—when driven to extremes—tears apart countries as different as Yugoslavia and Rwanda, and has even split apart well-established democracies such as Canada and the United Kingdom (where Scottish separatism is on the rise).

The social, cultural, and legal elements that hold America together are well known. They include a shared commitment to the democratic way of life, to the Constitution and its Bill of Rights, and to mutual tolerance. The common culture that

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underlies America's racial and ethnic pluralism is further fortified by a strong conviction that one's station in life is determined by hard work, saving, and taking responsibility for one's self and one's family. And most Americans still believe that while we are *different in some respects*, we are *joined by the* shared responsibilities of providing a good society for our children and ourselves—one free of racial and ethnic strife, a model of the thriving political order.

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Croly's progressive America

WILFRED M. McCLAY

No knowledgeable scholar of American political thought would dispute the importance and influence of Herbert Croly's 1909 book *The Promise of American Life*. In the book's own day, Felix Frankfurter extolled it as "the most powerful single contribution to progressive thinking," while Walter Lippmann crowned Croly the "first important [American] political philosopher" of the century. It was the right book at the right time. Not only did it ride the wave of reformist energy that swept American life at the turn of the century, embodied in such towering figures as Theodore Roosevelt, Woodrow Wilson, and Robert La Follette, but it also provided the era's scattered reform impulses with a coherent philosophical basis. The book's success offers potent evidence of the enduring power of ideas in history.

Although it sold a piddling 7,500 copies in its heyday, it managed to reach the right readership: the tiny but formidable elite of forward-looking, confident, university-trained students of political institutions and social forces who comprised

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the brains and motive force behind the Progressive movement. Among the book's most admiring readers was former President Roosevelt himself, who in 1910, two years before his ill-fated campaign to regain the presidency, wrote to Croly,

> I do not know when I have read a book which I felt profited me as much as your book on American life.... I shall use your ideas freely in speeches I intend to make. I know you won't object to my doing so, because, my dear sir, I can see that your purpose is to do your share in any way for the betterment of our national life.... I want very much to have a chance to talk to you.

Whether Croly's book was a cause or an effect of Roosevelt's New Nationalism, with its vision of a strong central government regulating a highly consolidated economy for the public good, there was an uncanny degree of convergence in the two men's thinking, indicating the extent to which *Promise* captured the *Zeitgeist* in its pages.

Historical significance is one thing and a present-day following is another; and though the book has its admirers, it is hard to find many people today who would testify under oath that they have actually read *The Promise of American Life*. In one sense, this is not surprising. It is an old book, and not easy to get hold of. Its 454 pages contain more than their fair share of ponderous, murky passages. Its leisurely exposition wanders, Mister Magoo fashion, over all the known universe, bumping into or stumbling over such diverse issues as labor unions, specialization, the Philippines question, the reorganization of state governments, municipal corruption, tax policy, and the Australian ballot. Because it was published nine decades ago, many of the issues raised by *Promise*, perhaps inevitably, are no longer of topical interest.

Still, this lumbering book, penned by an obscure and somewhat eccentric editor of an architectural trade magazine—who was later to become founding editor of *The New Republic*—remains worthy of our respectful examination. For one thing, it turns out to be a more interesting and complex book than either its proponents or detractors tell us. And its influence abides. Its fundamental ideas still flow unacknowledged through our national political discourse, permeating the agendas and rhetoric of both political parties. Nowhere else were progressive ideas expressed more powerfully. No book has been more

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effective in presenting a vision of what a fully consolidated and nationalized American polity and society might look like, and persuasive in arguing *why* such a transformation was necessary if the essence of America's promise was to be fulfilled. No book was more persuasive in showing how that analysis had to be followed all the way down the scale of social organization to the level of individual consciousness itself. And none contributed more to the fateful redefinition of liberalism in our century, from an ideology of the minimalist, decentralized state into an ideology of the activist, interventionist, and centralized national state.

Means and ends

Croly's book was so successful because it went far beyond merely offering a new political philosophy or a collection of novel policy suggestions. It did both those things, but it also gave vitality and plausibility to that philosophy and those ideas by folding them into a narrative. It presented its assertions and prescriptions as elements in a striking retelling of the story of America. The United States was founded, Croly argued, upon three not entirely compatible tenets: a belief in the virtues of pioneer individualism, a strong commitment to limited government (especially a limited central government), and an unflagging confidence in a national ideal that he dubbed "the Promise of American life," by which he meant the steady advance of democratic values and gradual amelioration of social and economic disparities. Much of our subsequent history, in his view, can be explained as a jostling for supremacy among these three principles, a conflict that has repeatedly jeopardized the Promise of American life.

In the early years of American history, it was naïvely assumed that the Promise would fulfill itself, and that the three tenets need not come into conflict. In fact, it might have seemed that they were complementary, since encouraging settlement by pioneers, unhindered by the dictates of government, seemed indispensable for realizing the nation's material promise. But from the young nation's very beginning, and certainly as early on as the Federalist-Republican debates, there had always been disagreements over which of the tenets to emphasize. One camp subordinated all else to the pursuit of the

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Promise, believing that more vigorous leadership and a more disciplined way of life would be necessary to sustain the possibility of American "national fulfillment." The other camp, which followed the path of "national distraction," was more backward-looking, willing to preserve the virtues of individualism and limited government at all cost, even if doing so came at the expense of the Promise.

Such divisions were present even before the creation of the nation, but did not fully emerge until the Washington administration. The emblematic political figures embodying these conflicting principles were Alexander Hamilton and Thomas Jefferson. Croly did not disguise his preference for the former's political philosophy. He did, however, acknowledge that each faction possessed some portion of the truth, and that a felicitous combination of the two, mixed in the proper proportions—more Hamiltonian than Jeffersonian, of course—was necessary to achieve the optimal form of democratic government. This had been true from the founding, but it became particularly true under the conditions of modern social and industrial life, in which the rise of giant business corporations and massive disparities in wealth threatened to overwhelm the Promise entirely. Under such circumstances, America had no choice but to abandon its outmoded commitment to pioneer individualism and limited government. For Croly, this meant embracing an expanded and activist central government, a government that would use, as he put it, in what are perhaps the book's best-known words, "Hamiltonian means" (a vigorous national government) to achieve "Jeffersonian ends" (the preservation of democratic values).

By putting it this way, Croly was arguing that the deepest meaning of American history had not changed. The means would change, but the end would not. America was still about the Promise, and the Promise had remained the same. But because the circumstances of modern American life had changed so dramatically, any effective pursuit of the Promise would have to be undertaken differently. Far from being a byproduct of the pursuit of individual well-being, or the gift of a providential destiny, the Promise now had to be conceived of as an ideal goal. All Americans now had to dedicate themselves to, and actively pursue, the transcendent national purpose of de-

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mocracy and social progress. That was what the Promise had been all along, Croly argued. But we now realized it would not be fulfilled unless we worked at it very hard, submerging selfish interests for the sake of a larger collective goal.

Heroes and villains

American political history unfolded with a succession of heroes and villains, who fell into the parallel traditions initiated by Hamilton and Jefferson in the nation's first years. This observation about American history was nothing new, but Croly's assessment of the relative merits of the two traditions differed strikingly from the conventional wisdom. Liberal historians had reviled Hamilton as a closet monarchist and exalted Jefferson as the friend of the common man. The Constitution itself would be cast by Progressive historians as a counter-revolutionary document, which sought to suppress the radical popular democracy unleashed by the American Revolution and to reestablish the authority of hegemonic elites. Not so for Croly. Instead, he thought that the Constitution was far superior to the alternatives and indispensable to the movement toward national cohesion. He also believed Hamilton to be, without doubt, the "finer" man and "sounder" intellect. By endorsing the ideas and institutions necessary to the development of a strong central government, Hamilton set America on the path toward a "constructive" nationalism.

Croly regarded Jefferson, on the other hand, as an "amiable enthusiast" at best, and a dangerous purveyor of "intellectual superficiality and insincerity" at worst. In Croly's view, Jefferson had an impoverished definition of democracy, which was "tantamount to extreme individualism," designed merely for "the greatest satisfaction of its individual members," and not for any larger, collective goal. The net effect of his political ideas was "negative and fatalistic ... the old fatal policy of drift." Fortunately, Jefferson's triumph in the election of 1800 did not lead to the dismantling of the Federal structure Hamilton had created. But it did lead to a stagnant "alliance" between Federalist and democratic principles, a standoff that ensured no further progress would be made in favor of a national ideal. Subsequent national leaders would then feel compelled to pay obeisance to antiquated ideas.

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Take Andrew Jackson, for example, who was an unmitigated disaster so far as Croly was concerned. Not only did Jackson destroy one of the great Hamiltonian national institutions—the Bank of the United States—but he destroyed an honest class of skilled and conscientious public officials by introducing the "spoils system" into civil service. The popular orators of "Jacksonian democracy" followed a similar line, mouthing a crude individualism that "had not the remotest conception" of a "gallant and exclusive devotion to some disinterested, and perhaps unpopular moral, intellectual, or technical purpose." Senator Stephen A. Douglas also represented this tradition by championing the antinational concept of "popular sovereignty," a notion that made democracy equivalent to "national incoherence and irresponsibility." More recently, William Jennings Bryan had arisen, a man born "too late," whose antique Jacksonian and antinationalist prejudices included "dislike of organization and of the faith in expert skill, in specialized training, and in large personal opportunities and responsibilities which are implied by a trust in organization." Such backwardness "disqualified him for effective leadership of the party of reform."

As is so often the case, the list of villains was longer and more colorful than the list of heroes. That was especially inevitable for Croly, for although he deplored the populistic and antinational conceptions of democracy that held so many Americans in their grip, he was not led to advocate the overt elitism of the Federalists and their successors. He was too much of a democrat at heart for that. Instead, he sought examples of vigorous, enlightened leadership that self-consciously advanced the Promise, and such examples were few and far between. Indeed, in the desert of post-Jeffersonian nineteenth-century statesmanship, only the extraordinary figure of Abraham Lincoln, the nationalist-savior par excellence, graced an otherwise barren landscape. In his debates with Douglas, Lincoln sought to demonstrate that the *national* ideal was also the highest expression of the *democratic* ideal, which was precisely Croly's conviction as well. Although Lincoln was a man of simple, provincial origins, hailing from the prairie West, he demonstrated by his personal example how the triumph of a national ideal would inexorably lead to more expansive sympathies and

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refined sensibilities. He was "an example of high and disinterested intellectual culture," a man who had "made for himself a second nature, compact of insight and loving-kindness," which led him to become a martyr to the greatest of national purposes.

But there was only one Lincoln, and Croly's contemporaries did not offer much by way of comparable inspiration. The most hopeful figure on the horizon was a vigorous nationalist from Lincoln's party, and Croly's soon-to-be admirer, Theodore Roosevelt, who had already expressed his view that reform had to be linked to "the national idea." Although Croly conceded that Roosevelt's accomplishments were rather limited thus far, the potential for greatness was evident. He could imagine Roosevelt as a "Thor wielding with power and effect a sledge-hammer in the cause of national righteousness."

By proposing to use the national government to make America "a more complete democracy in organization and practice," Roosevelt was promoting Croly's philosophy, showing the requisite devotion to both national and democratic ideals. Like Croly, he believed the movement toward concentration in industry was both inexorable and potentially beneficial, so long as government responded with a vigorous program of centralized regulation, rather than crude and wanton trust-busting. In stark contrast to the Jeffersonian-Jacksonian-Bryanite hostility to scientifically trained experts, Roosevelt favored such men. He would place them in public office and provide them with the administrative power and machinery they needed to regulate and rationalize. It would be through the success of such initiatives, believed Croly, that the future of the Promise would be made safe.

Disinterested individuality

Such was Croly's vision of American history. He saw a slow, groping progress from a disorganized and decentralized form of laissez-faire individualism to an organized and socialized form of disciplined nationhood. Fueled by steady pursuit of the Promise, the movement would succeed once the virtues of pioneering independence were superseded by the virtues of social solidarity and "disinterested" knowledge. One should take note of Croly's repeated use of the word "disinterested,"

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a word Progressive reformers could hardly have done without. It is doubtless a fact of great significance that this word's meaning is almost completely lost upon our more jaded age, in which it is nearly always used, incorrectly, as a synonym for "uninterested." For Progressives, however, the word carried strong ethical implications, pointing toward an extraordinarily high standard of unselfish, reasonable, ascetic, scientific, and impersonal judgment—a disposition that always placed the public interest above all other considerations. It was deployed in opposition to the noun *interest*—often rendered, far more ominously, as *The Interests*—which stood not only for such mammoth corporate powers as U.S. Steel and Standard Oil but for all that was corrupting about the "trusts" and pressure groups dominating modern industrial America. If "disinterestedness" stood for the unsullied and impartial intellect that Croly's nationalism would require, "The Interests" stood for everything that would destroy the nation and its Promise.

For Croly, the need for national organization went beyond economic considerations to affect individuals' very souls. Even if laissez-faire economics had resulted in economic equality, it would still be wrong. "The popular enjoyment of practically unrestricted economic opportunities," Croly declared, "is precisely the condition which makes for individual bondage." The system of free enterprise compromised men in their successes as much as their failures. It reduced them to a common mold of acquisitiveness and denied them a life of fully realized *individuality*, as opposed to a pathological individualism. "The truth," Croly contended, "is that individuality cannot be dissociated from the pursuit of a disinterested object"—an object that is sought wholeheartedly, selflessly, and altruistically, rather than as a means to something else. A disinterested achievement has "unequivocal social value," because its pursuit reunites the solitary individual with his fellows. Competitive capitalism, on the other hand, imprisons him in his pinched solitude. The larger the object of disinterested labor, the more admirable the results; and the largest of all pursuits are those undertaken for the sake of the nation. Hence the true liberation of the individual will come only with the realization of the national ideal.

Thus *Promise* was a brief for national consolidation, the

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amelioration of sectional antagonisms, and the full-scale reorganization of state and local authority. The cultivation of a firmly rooted national identity was the key to all good things: "No permanent good can come to the individual and society except through the preservation and development of the existing system of nationalized states." Croly was concerned about the problem of what we might today call "atomization," the creation of a "vast incoherent mass of the American people," disconnected from all formerly essential sources of social meaning. But he felt certain that the creation of "a conscious social ideal" on a national scale could prevent such sources of conflict, taking the place of older, more instinctive affinities and affiliations. He was convinced that the nation, far from being too large and abstract an object to fulfill the quest for community, would elevate and transform local sentiments in the very process of eliciting them. A "national community" would enlarge citizens' hearts by enlarging the scope of their affections and affinities.

Ultimately, this social ideal would metamorphose into an object of faith, binding the nation together in a Rousseauean civil religion built upon human brotherhood. Here Croly showed his abiding debt to the ideals of his father, David, a devotee of Auguste Comte's religion of humanity. Yet there were older moral and religious sentiments involved too. Croly understood that the maintenance of his social ideal would demand strenuous discipline and continuous moral effort. It is no coincidence that, in the book's final paragraph, he approvingly cites Montesquieu's saying that "the principle of democracy is virtue" and concludes by calling on the people of America to imitate the lives of "heroes and saints," even to the point of serving as heroic and saintly exemplars themselves. The lure of self-denying republican virtue and religious asceticism was immensely strong for him since they were inseparable from his hopes for the national ideal. Perhaps most stunningly, Croly asserts that

> democracy must stand or fall on a platform of possible human perfectibility. If human nature cannot be improved by institutions, democracy is at best a more than usually safe form of political organization; and the only interesting inquiry about its future would be: How long will it continue to work?

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In the end, faith in the Promise was more than faith in steady improvement; it meant faith in the possibility of earthly perfection, of the Kingdom of God established here below.

Inflated expectations

Such a faith was characteristic of many Progressive reformers who had been deeply affected by the optimistic Social Gospel teachings of Washington Gladden and Walter Rauschenbusch. It mingled a vestigial liberal-Protestant understanding of sin and redemption with the can-do outlook of reformist social science. But such a view could not have been more different than the one taken by the Framers of the Constitution, who most emphatically did not believe in the malleability of human nature, the possibility of sustained disinterestedness, the ease of maintaining a virtuous citizenry, or even in democracy itself *per se*. They too were profoundly concerned about the problem of interest. But they regarded it as a given that one had to devise structures to channel its effects, rather than stake everything on the possibility of eliminating its causes.

Croly had a far more ambitious, and far less realistic, understanding of the problem than the Framers. In this respect, he typifies one of the most striking paradoxes of Progressive thought, which prided itself on its clever, jaundiced, historicist, unillusioned analysis of the Founding and the Constitution, but sought to restore the semblance of republican virtue and public-spiritedness through reconstructions of political society based upon just such corrosive analyses. One might venture to say that they pursued Aristotelian ends by Machiavellian means—an ambition that is too clever by half and bound to fail. They deconstructed the rhetoric and structure of the Constitution into a tawdry tangle of interest, calculation, and improvisation. But then they turned around and expected the citizenry could, with the right tutelage, be remade into disinterested servants of a high national ideal and a glorious national purpose. They fancied that a people's reverence is a fungible quantity, which could be debunked in one place in order to be transferred to a more worthy object. A more self-delusive strategy would be difficult to imagine.

Croly himself was fairly restrained in writing about the

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Constitution in *Promise*. He saw the document as an important step along the road to nationalization, and while clearly flawed and outdated, good enough for practical purposes for the time being. Although he deplored the tendency to regard the Constitution with "superstitious awe," he believed that wholesale constitutional revision was not worth attempting. Yet, in his Godkin Lectures at Harvard in 1913, which would be published as *Progressive Democracy* (1914), he went much further, rendering the dichotomies of American political thought in a rather different way. From the Revolution onward, he argued, America had been divided between two political tendencies: one willing to place ultimate faith in the wisdom of the people, and one that could not, preferring to rely upon the formal restraints and safeguards embodied in the Constitution. Croly thought it was time to discard the artificiality, proceduralism, and pessimism of the latter, and embrace the freshness and optimism of the former. He now saw the matter in terms of the old Christian dichotomy of spirit and law: A genuine democracy would affirm the living spirit of the people and open the way to everlasting progress, while a fearful society would cling to the false security of inert legalisms, adopting unchanging rules and laws as if they were "sacred words ... deposited in the ark of the covenant." The former kept alive hope for fulfillment of the Promise. The latter suppressed it with the dead hand of formalism.

Ironically, such a view of the Constitution directly echoed the words of Jefferson, who, notwithstanding his strict constructionism, mocked those "who look at constitutions with sanctimonious reverence, and deem them like the ark of the covenant," and who "ascribe to the preceding age a wisdom more than human." Both men preferred a frankly instrumental and contingent view of the Constitution, which was to be a mere document that should be held lightly, made readily adaptable to other ends, and ignored or worked around when it was necessary to do so. Such a view has prevailed ever since among historians and legal scholars—except on those rare occasions when they find it opportune to cite the Framer's original intentions.

But Croly's un-Jeffersonian paeans to the national idea have fared less well. They now seem ludicrously inflated, even for

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those who accept the view that, for most purposes, social and economic problems are best addressed at the national level. The incantatory power of the idea of the nation has been withering away, precisely because it could not bear the weight of excessive expectation with which Croly freighted it. What Robert Nisbet observed almost 50 years ago, in *The Quest for Community*, remains truer than ever: The nation cannot be a community, and those who seek to make it one are doomed to fail, often in ways that are profoundly damaging and corrupting both to the nation itself and to other, more genuine forms of human association. This does not mean that there is no need for a national government and no possibility of legitimate and healthy bonds forming among its citizens. It merely means that the proper scope of each level and kind of human association has to be understood and its limits observed. It undermines the nation just as surely to expect too much from it as it does to expect too little.

The meaning of national purpose

On that count, the Framers look better and better as time goes on—and not only for their realism about human nature. For it was precisely the problem of dividing and disbursing authority, and of demarcating the scope of its respective spheres, that they addressed with such great ingenuity in the Constitution. They were not under the illusion that a total consolidation of power on the national scale was desirable, even if it were possible. Instead, they attempted to mix the respective scales of political organization and balance the possibilities of both federal and national governments in one complex constitutional republic. Progressives found the results of this effort exasperating and unworkable, a relic of eighteenth-century thinking that stood in the way of the vigorous and intelligent national executive authority they cherished.

Progressives and their successors have done much to dismantle that older structure and suppress the signals it once sent. But increasingly it is they, and not the Framers, whose ideas appear hopelessly outdated. The Framers' supple structure anticipated and addressed, on a smaller scale, what will almost certainly be one of the central political problems facing the world of the next century: how to manage the inexo-

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rable and growing tension between an increasingly consolidated and globalized world economy, on the one hand, and the rising demands for the preservation of national independence and local autonomy on the other. The growth of the former will only intensify the political and cultural growth of the latter. We live in a world that is simultaneously both consolidating and disaggregating, and those who would stabilize and manage this dizzying, contradictory condition will have to revive the federal idea, in some form or another. They will not need to "reinvent" American government—they will need to rediscover it.

In fairness to Croly, his understanding of subnational levels of organization, as reflected in *Promise*, was far more subtle and suggestive, if also more sketchy, than that offered by many of his Progressive brethren. Although the book is highly critical (and not without reason) of existing state governments and makes detailed recommendations for their reorganization (including many egregiously bad or unworkable propositions), it continues to affirm their utility and their proper role. Croly insisted in no uncertain terms, in his chapter entitled "Nationality and Centralization," that centralization and nationalization were not necessarily the same thing, and the elimination of state and local institutions would be "absurd."

Croly argued that nationalization should be understood as "a formative and enlightening political transformation," in which a people's "political, social, and economic organization or policy is being coordinated with their actual needs and their moral and political ideals." Nationhood, then, arose out of unity of purpose, rather than unity of organization. Such unity could be put into effect in a variety of ways, under a variety of governmental arrangements. While America clearly needed more centralization, he warned that centralization which proceeded mechanically, without reference to any such larger motive, might actually impede nationalization, precisely because it would substitute procedure for purpose. One can well imagine that Croly would have looked with favor on the slogan, "Think Globally, Act Locally," since it suggests that the centrality of the global *idea* is more important than centralized control of the *institutions* through which that idea is expressed.

Croly put forward a much more powerful and interesting

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idea than that offered by top-down consolidationists. Yet the Framers' understanding was superior to both. They had a less demanding, but more realistic and liberal, understanding of the meaning of national purpose. They understood that while all nations need to have unifying objectives and strong central governments to embody and express them, the profoundest of these objectives is an oblique one: to serve as a protective container for other, more particular human ends and goals, which are best pursued in a multitude of disparate communities. For Croly, on the other hand, the true national purpose, the only purpose truly worthy of the nation, was the pursuit of the Promise—that shimmering, alluring goal ever yet to be reached, toward which a national army of disinterested souls was earnestly marching. The idea of the American nation as an intermediate container for aspirations beyond its own scope could never have satisfied his craving for redemptive unity. Anything short of that goal settled for imperfection, betraying the Promise.

Promises, promises

There are several senses of the word "promise," and Croly seemed to have been thinking of only one of them. The unseasoned training-camp rookie, the unrun thoroughbred, the uncleared and uncultivated land, the unset gem: these are examples of Croly's sense of promise, the unfulfilled potential of a marvelous but undeveloped or untested thing, of which much is hoped or expected. This kind of promise is a quality that inheres in the "promising" object itself. No one could have ever assured America that "if you do this, you will receive that," just as no one can assure that the promising rookie will live up to his promise. Such promise, in Croly's sense of the word, is neither destiny nor divine covenant. In fact, part of the point of calling it a "promise" is precisely to underscore the possibility that it might go unfulfilled.

This, however, is a derivative meaning of the word "promise." More fundamentally, a promise is something "sent forward," an agreement, a covenant, a contract—a solemn vow to do or not to do something. In this sense, something is promising because someone made a promise regarding it. The religious tradition upon which Croly drew understands God as a

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maker of promises. And that tradition's version of the human story is punctuated with promises: the Promise to Noah, the Promised Land of Canaan, the promised Messiah, the promised Second Coming of Christ. Such promises, like all the Biblical covenants, committed humanity to a range of reciprocal obligations. The same dynamic holds for secular promises, whether courtroom oaths, marriage vows, business contracts, or New Year's resolutions. A promise is a set of agreed-upon words that are taken to guide and hold authority over the course of future actions. In a republican regime, one could say that the law itself is a kind of promise, insofar as it is the mechanism through which a self-governing people makes mutual commitments and governs itself.

Indeed, once ratified, the U.S. Constitution became a kind of promise, a solemn meta-promise enacted by all the relevant parties, mutually committing themselves to abide in perpetuity by certain structures of governance—including the means by which those structures might be amended—and staking success in the national undertaking on their faithfulness in observing the terms of the promise. It is the Constitution itself that best deserves to be called the Promise of American life, both because it was the central promise of our national history, and because it has made it possible for a "promising" nation to live up to much of its promise.

To the Constitution

So we have two different meanings attached to the Promise of American life, and it makes all the difference in the world which we choose. Do we opt for Croly's sense of the Promise as a vast opportunity to transform the human condition and bring into being the New Jerusalem on the American strand? Or do we accept the Founders' more skeptical vision of human nature?

In pondering these questions, one might consider the way that Americans are instinctively drawn, during moments of domestic crisis and uncertainty, to political leaders known for their genuine reverence for the Constitution. Such leaders command our respectful attention, irrespective of party affiliation, precisely because they associate themselves so strongly with the spirit of the Constitution. Of course, it is equally

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true that Americans, like everyone else, have at times been drawn in the opposite direction, to the charismatic leader, the Theodore or Franklin Delano Roosevelt, who embodies the national government and personifies the national will, even if in the process he inevitably shows precious little regard for the niceties of constitutionalism. But surely if there is one thing the politics of this bloody century ought to have taught us, it is the danger of wishing to be ruled by myth-sized savior-leaders, and the pervasive dishonesty and fakery that inevitably flow from the false personification of high office. There was a mature sobriety in the eighteenth century's distrust of executive power, a sobriety that makes even more sense in an era dominated by spin-doctoring and media-magnified cults of personality.

Reverence for the Constitution remains our most reliable touchstone. None but a fool would trust today, as the Progressives did, in the disinterestedness of experts, the perspicacity of social reformers, or the truthfulness of presidents. Many more of us are inclined, in the final analysis, to trust in the disinterestedness of the Constitution, battered and bowdlerized though it be. That is why even the highly partisan legal scholars and historians who testified against President Clinton's impeachment felt compelled to do so in the name of the Constitution and of the original intentions of the Framers. It was an argumentative strategy that one can safely predict they would have roundly ridiculed in an academic setting but that they did not hesitate to employ in a public one. They were smart to do so. Their claims to expertise fell embarrassingly flat and impressed no one. But their instinct to move the discussion toward the Constitution, and to root their arguments in it, was more effective. It showed where the balance wheel of broad public authority is still to be found in this country.

The Constitution remains the shelter to which we all ultimately repair in our public life, precisely because it remains our principal anchor of legitimacy, one that neither the promise of expertise nor the promise of an earthly paradise can match. For a fanciful Promise wistfully sought is very different from a solemn Promise faithfully kept, just as a junk bond is different from a Treasury bill. Croly's understanding of the

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Promise, despite its many generous, intelligent, and visionary qualities, failed to take account of that. What Macaulay said wrongly of the U.S. Constitution could be said rightly of Crolyan progressivism: It was all sail and no anchor. And today, that drifting vessel can no longer even claim the wind at its back. Those who still embrace it communicate their shared sentiments through occult signs and secret handshakes, publicly averring that "the era of big government is over" while crossing their fingers behind their backs. It's a good enough tactic for the short run but bad strategy for the duration.

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Are Europe's cities better?

PIETRO S. NIVOLA

CITIES grow in three directions: *in* by crowding, *up* into multi-story buildings, or *out* toward the periphery. Although cities everywhere have developed in each of these ways at various times, nowhere in Europe do urban settlements sprawl as much as in the United States. Less than a quarter of the U.S. population lived in suburbia in 1950. Now well over half does. Why have most European cities remained compact compared to the hyperextended American metropolis?

At first glance, the answer seems elementary. The urban centers of Europe are older, and the populations of their countries did not increase as rapidly in the postwar period. In addition, stringent national land-use laws slowed exurban development, whereas the disjointed jurisdictions in U.S. metropolitan regions encouraged it.

But on closer inspection, this conventional wisdom does not suffice. It is true that the contours of most major urban areas in the United States were formed to a great extent by

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economic and demographic expansion after the Second World War. But the same was true in much of Europe, where entire cities were reduced to rubble by the war and had to be rebuilt from ground zero.

Consider Germany, whose cities were carpet bombed. Many German cities today are old in name only, and though the country's population as a whole grew less quickly than America's after 1950, West German cities experienced formidable economic growth and in-migrations. Yet the metropolitan population density of the United States is still about one-fourth that of Germany. New York, our densest city, has approximately one-third the number of inhabitants per square mile as Frankfurt.

Sprawl has continued apace even in places where the American population has grown little or not at all in recent decades. From 1970 to 1990, the Chicago area's population rose by only 4 percent, but the region's built-up land increased 46 percent. Metropolitan Cleveland's population actually declined by 8 percent, yet 33 percent more of the area's territory was developed.

The fragmented jurisdictional structure in U.S. metropolitan areas, wherein every suburban town or county has control over the use of land, does not adequately explain sprawl either. Since 1950, about half of America's central cities at least doubled their territory by annexing new suburbs. Houston covered 160 square miles in 1950. By 1980, exercising broad powers to annex its environs, it incorporated 556 square miles. In the same 30-year period, Jacksonville went from being a town of 30 square miles to a regional government enveloping 841 square miles—two-thirds the size of Rhode Island. True, the tri-state region of New York contains some 780 separate localities, some with zoning ordinances that permit only low-density subdivisions. But the urban region of Paris—Ile de France—comprises 1,300 municipalities, all of which have considerable discretion in the consignment of land for development.

To be sure, European central governments presumably oversee these local decisions through nationwide land-use statutes. But is this a telling distinction? The relationship of U.S. state governments to their local communities is roughly analogous

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to that of Europe's unitary regimes to their respective local entities. Not only are the governments of some of our states behemoths (New York State's annual expenditures, for example, approximate Sweden's entire national budget) but a significant number have enacted territorial planning legislation reminiscent of European guidelines. Indeed, from a legal standpoint, local governments in this country are mere "creatures" of the states, which can direct, modify, or even abolish their localities at will. Many European municipalities, with their ancient independent charters, are less subordinated.

The enforcement of land-use plans varies considerably in Europe. In Germany, as in America, some *Länder* (or states) are more restrictive than others. The Scandinavians, Dutch, and British take planning more seriously than, say, the Italians. The late Antonio Cederna, an astute journalist, wrote volumes about the egregious violations of building and development codes in and around Italy's historic centers. Critics who assume that land regulators in the United States are chronically permissive, whereas Europe's growth managers are always scrupulous and "smart," ought to contemplate, say, the unsightly new suburbs stretching across the northwestern plain of Florence toward Prato, and then visit Long Island's East End, where it is practically impossible to obtain a building permit along many miles of pristine coastline.

Big, fast, and violent

The more important contrasts in urban development between America and Europe lie elsewhere. With three and half million square miles of territory, the United States has had much more space over which to spread its settlements. And on this vast expanse, decentralizing technologies took root and spread decades earlier than in other industrial countries. In 1928, for example, 78 percent of all the motor vehicles in the world were located in the United States. With incomes rising rapidly, and the costs of producing vehicles declining, 56 percent of American families owned an automobile by that time. No European country reached a comparable level of automobile ownership until well after the Second World War. America's motorized multitudes were able to begin commuting between suburban residences and workplaces

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decades before such an arrangement was imaginable in any other advanced nation.

A more perverse but also distinctive cause of urban sprawl in the United States has been the country's comparatively high level of violent crime. Why a person is ten times more likely to be murdered in America than in Japan, seven times more likely to be raped than in France, or almost four times more likely to be robbed at gun point than in the United Kingdom, is a complex question. But three things are known.

First, although criminal violence has declined markedly here in the past few years, America's cities have remained dangerous by international standards. New York's murder rate dropped by two-thirds between 1991 and 1997, yet there were still 767 homicides committed that year. London, a mega-city of about the same size, had less than 130. Second, the rates of personal victimization, including murder, rape, assault, robbery, and personal theft, tend to be much higher within U.S. central cities than in their surroundings. In 1997, incidents of violent crime inside Washington, D.C., for instance, were six times more frequent than in the city's suburbs. Third, there is a strong correlation between city crime rates and the flight of households and businesses to safer jurisdictions. According to economists Julie Berry Cullen of the University of Michigan and Steven D. Levitt of the University of Chicago, between 1976 and 1993, a city typically lost one resident for every additional crime committed within it.

Opinion surveys regularly rank public safety as a leading consideration in the selection of residential locations. In 1992, when New Yorkers were asked to name "the most important reason" for moving out of town, the most common answer was "crime, lack of safety" (47.2 percent). All other reasons—including "high cost of living" (9.3 percent) and "not enough affordable housing" (5.3 percent)—lagged far behind. Two years ago, when the American Assembly weighed the main obstacles to business investments in the inner cities, it learned that businessmen identified lack of security as *the* principal impediment. In short, crime in America has further depopulated the cores of metropolitan areas, scattering their inhabitants and businesses.

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The not-so-invisible hand

In addition to these fundamental differences, the public agendas here and in major European countries have been miles apart. The important distinctions, moreover, have less to do with differing "urban" programs than with other national policies, the consequences of which are less understood.

For example, lavish agricultural subsidies in Europe have kept more farmers in business and dissuaded them from selling their land to developers. Per hectare of farmland, agricultural subventions are 12 times more generous in France than in the United States, a divergence that surely helps explain why small farms still surround Paris but not New York City.

Thanks to scant taxation of gasoline, the price of automotive fuel in the United States is almost a quarter of what it is in Italy. Is it any surprise that Italians would live closer to their urban centers, where they can more easily walk to work or rely on public transportation? On a per capita basis, residents of Milan make an average of 350 trips a year on public transportation; people in San Diego make an average of 17.

Gasoline is not the only form of energy that is much cheaper in the United States than in Europe. Rates for electric power and furnace fuels are too. The expense of heating the equivalent of an average detached U.S. suburban home, and of operating the gigantic home appliances (such as refrigerators and freezers) that substitute for neighborhood stores in many American residential communities, would be daunting to most households in large parts of Europe.

Systems of taxation make a profound difference. European tax structures penalize consumption. Why don't most of the Dutch and Danes vacate their compact towns and cities where many commuters ride bicycles, rather than drive sport-utility vehicles, to work? The sales tax on a new, medium-sized car in the Netherlands is approximately nine times higher than in the United States; in Denmark, 37 times higher. The U.S. tax code favors spending over saving (the latter is effectively taxed twice) and provides inducements to purchase particular goods—most notably houses, since the mortgage interest is deductible. The effect of such provisions is to lead most American families into the suburbs, where spacious dwellings are available and absorb much of the nation's personal savings pool.

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Tax policy is not the only factor promoting home ownership in the United States. Federal Housing Administration and Veterans Administration mortgage guarantees financed more than a quarter of the suburban single-family homes built in the immediate postwar period. In Europe, the housing stocks of many countries were decimated by the war. Governments responded to the emergency by erecting apartment buildings and extending rental subsidies to large segments of the population. America also built a good deal of publicly subsidized rental housing in the postwar years, but chiefly to accommodate the most impoverished city-dwellers. Unlike the mixed-income housing complexes scattered around London or Paris, U.S. public housing projects further concentrated the urban poor in the inner cities, turning the likes of Chicago's South Side into breeding grounds of social degradation and violence. Middle-class city-dwellers fled from these places to less perilous locations in the metropolitan fringe.

Few decisions are more consequential for the shape of cities than a society's investments in transportation infrastructure. Government at all levels in the United States has committed hundreds of billions to the construction and maintenance of highways, passenger railroads, and transit systems. What counts, however, is not just the magnitude of the commitment but the *distribution* of the public expenditures among modes of transportation. In the United States, where the share claimed by roads has dwarfed that of alternatives by about six to one, an unrelenting increase in automobile travel and a steady decline in transit usage—however heavily subsidized—was inevitable.

Dense cities dissipate without relatively intensive use of mass transit. In 1945, transit accounted for approximately 35 percent of urban passenger miles traveled in the United States. By 1994, the figure had dwindled to less than 3 percent—or roughly one-fifth the average in Western Europe. If early on, American transportation planners had followed the British or French budgetary practice of allocating between 40 and 60 percent of their transport outlays to passenger railroads and mass transit systems, instead of nearly 85 percent for highways, there is little question that many U.S. cities would be more compressed today.

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Dense cities also require a vibrant economy of neighborhood shops and services. (Why live in town if performing life's simplest everyday functions, like picking up fresh groceries for supper, requires driving to distant vendors?) But local shopkeepers cannot compete with the regional megastores that are proliferating in America's metropolitan shopping centers and strip malls. Multiple restrictions on the penetration and predatory pricing practices of large retailers in various European countries protect small urban businesses. The costs to consumers are high, but the convenience and intimacy of London's "high streets" or of the corner markets in virtually every Parisian *arrondissement* are preserved.

"Shift and shaft" federalism

Europe's cities retain their merchants and inhabitants for yet another reason: European municipalities typically do not face the same fiscal liabilities as U.S. cities. Local governments in Germany derive less than one-third of their income from local revenues; higher levels of government transfer the rest. For a wide range of basic functions—including educational institutions, hospitals, prisons, courts, utilities, and so on—the national treasury funds as much as 80 percent of the expense incurred by England's local councils. Localities in Italy and the Netherlands raise only about 10 percent of their budgets locally. In contrast, U.S. urban governments must largely support themselves: They collect two-thirds of their revenues from local sources.

In principle, self-sufficiency is a virtue; municipal taxpayers ought to pay directly for the essential services they use. But in practice, these taxpayers are also being asked to finance plenty of other costly projects, many of which are mandated, but underfunded, by the federal government. Affluent jurisdictions may be able to absorb this added burden, but communities strapped for revenues often cannot. To satisfy the federal government's paternalistic commands, many old cities have been forced to raise taxes and cut the services that local residents need or value most. In response, businesses and middle-class households flee to the suburbs.

America's public schools are perhaps the clearest example of a crucial local service that is tottering under the weight of

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unfunded federal directives. Few nations, if any, devote as large a share of their total public education expenditures to *nonteaching* personnel. There may be several excuses for this lopsided administrative overhead, but one explanation is almost certainly the growth of government regulation and the armies of academic administrators needed to handle the red tape.

Schools are required, among other things, to test drinking water, remove asbestos, perform recycling, insure "gender equity," and provide something called "special education." The latter program alone forces local authorities to set aside upwards of $30 billion a year to meet the needs of students with disabilities. Meanwhile, according to a 1996 report by the U.S. Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations, the federal government reimburses a paltry 8 percent of the expense. Compliance costs for urban school districts, where the concentrations of learning-disabled pupils are high and the means to support them low, can be particularly onerous. Out of a total $850 million of local funds budgeted for 77,000 students in the District of Columbia, for instance, $170 million has been earmarked for approximately 8,000 students receiving "special education."

Wretched schools are among the reasons why most American families have fled the cities for greener pastures. It is hard enough for distressed school systems like the District's, which struggle to impart even rudimentary literacy, to compete with their wealthier suburban counterparts. The difficulty is compounded by federal laws that, without adequate recompense, divert scarce educational resources from serving the overwhelming majority of students.

Schools are but one of many municipal services straining to defray centrally dictated expenses. Consider the plight of urban mass transit in the United States. Its empty seats and colossal operating deficits are no secret. Less acknowledged are the significant financial obligations imposed by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and subsequent legislation. To comply with the Department of Transportation's rules for retrofitting public buses and subways, New York City estimated in 1980 that it would need to spend more than $1 billion in capital improvements on top of $50 million in recurring an-

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nual operating costs. As the city's mayor, Edward I. Koch, said at the time, "It would be cheaper for us to provide every severely disabled person with taxi service than make 255 of our subway stations accessible."

Although the Reagan administration later lowered these costs, passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act in 1990 led to a new round of pricey special accommodations in New York and other cities with established transit systems. Never mind that the Washington Metro is the nation's most modern and well-designed subway system. It has been ordered to tear up 45 stations and install bumpy tiles along platform edges to accommodate the sight impaired, a multi-million dollar effort. At issue here, as in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, is not whether provisions for the handicapped are desirable and just. Rather, the puzzle is how Congress can sincerely claim to champion these causes if it scarcely appropriates the money to advance them.

Nearly two decades ago, Mayor Koch detailed in *The Public Interest* what he called the "millstone" of some 47 unfunded mandates.[1] The tally of national statutes encumbering U.S. local governments since then has surpassed at least one hundred. And this does not count the hundreds of federal court orders and agency rulings that micromanage, and often drain, local resources. By 1994, Los Angeles estimated that federally mandated programs were costing the city approximately $840 million a year. Erasing that debit from the city's revenue requirements, either by meeting it with federal and state aid or by substantial recisions, would be tantamount to reducing city taxes as much as 20 percent. A windfall that large could do more to reclaim the city's slums, and halt the hollowing out of core communities, than would all of the region's planned "empowerment zones," "smart growth" initiatives, and "livability" bond issues.

Follow Europe?

To conclude that greater fiscal burden sharing and a wide range of other public policies help sustain Europe's concentrated cities is not to say, of course, that all those policies

[1] Edward I. Koch, "The Mandate Millstone," *The Public Interest*, Number 61, Fall 1980.

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have enhanced the welfare of Europeans—and hence, that the United States ought to emulate them. The central governments of Western Europe may assume more financial responsibilities instead of bucking them down to the local level, but these top-heavy regimes also levy much higher taxes. Fully funding all of Washington's many social mandates with national tax dollars would mean, as in much of Europe, a more centralized and bloated welfare state.

Most households are not better off when farmers are heavily subsidized, or when anticompetitive practices protect microbusinesses at the expense of larger, more efficient firms. Nor would most consumers gain greater satisfaction from housing strategies that encourage renter occupancy but not homeownership, or from gas taxes and transportation policies that force people out of their cars and onto buses, trains, or bicycles.

In fact, these sorts of public biases have exacted an economic toll in various Western European countries, and certainly in Japan, while the United States has prospered in part because its economy is less regulated, and its metropolitan areas have been allowed to decompress. So suffocating is the extreme concentration of people and functions in the Tokyo area that government planners now view decentralization as a top economic priority. Parts of the British economy, too, seem squeezed by development controls. A recent report by McKinsey and Company attributes lagging productivity in key sectors to Britain's land-use restrictions that hinder entry and expansion of the most productive firms.

The densely settled cities of Europe teem with small shops. But the magnetic small-business presence reflects, at least in part, a heavily regulated labor market that stifles entrepreneurs who wish to expand and thus employ more workers. As the *Economist* noted in a review of the Italian economy, "Italy's plethora of small firms is as much an indictment of its economy as a triumph: many seem to lack either the will or the capital to keep growing." The lack of will is not surprising; moving from small to midsize or large means taking on employees who are nearly impossible to lay off when times turn bad, and it means saddling a company with costly mandated payroll benefits. Italy may have succeeded in conserving clusters of small businesses

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in its old cities and towns, but perhaps at the price of abetting double-digit unemployment in its economy as a whole.

Striking a balance

America's strewn-out cities are not without their own inefficiencies. The sprawling conurbations demand, for one thing, virtually complete reliance on automotive travel, thereby raising per capita consumption of motor fuel to four times the average of cities in Europe. That extraordinary level of fossil-fuel combustion complicates U.S. efforts to lower this country's considerable contribution to the buildup of greenhouse gases. Our seemingly unbounded suburbanization has also blighted central cities that possess irreplaceable architectural and historic assets. A form of metropolitan growth that displaces only bleak and obsolescent urban relics, increasingly discarded by almost everyone, may actually be welfare-enhancing. A growth process that also blights and abandons a nation's important civic and cultural centers, however, is rightfully grounds for concern.

Still, proposals to reconfigure urban development in the United States need to shed several misconceptions. As research by Helen Ladd of Duke University has shown, the costs of delivering services in high-density settlements frequently increase, not decrease. Traffic congestion at central nodes also tends to worsen with density, and more people may be exposed to hazardous levels of soot and smog. (The inhabitants of Manhattan drive fewer vehicle miles per capita than persons who inhabit New York's low-density suburbs. Nevertheless, Manhattan's air is often less healthy because the borough's traffic is unremittingly thick and seldom free-flowing, and more people live amid the fumes.) Growth boundaries, such as those circumscribing Portland, Oregon, raise real estate values, so housing inside the boundaries becomes less, not more, "affordable." Even the preservation of farmland, a high priority of managed growth plans, should be placed in proper perspective. The United States is the world's most productive agricultural producer, with ample capacity to spare. Propping up marginal farms in urbanizing areas may not put this acreage to uses most valued by society.

In sum, the diffuse pattern of urban growth in the United

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States is partly a consequence of particular geographic conditions, cultural characteristics, and raw market forces, but also an accidental outcome of certain government policies. Several of these formative influences differ fundamentally from those that have shaped European cities. Critics of the low-density American cityscape may admire the European model, but they would do well to recognize the full breadth of hard policy choices, and tough tradeoffs, that would have to be made before the constraints on sprawl in this country could even faintly begin to resemble Europe's.

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Is regional government the answer?

FRED SIEGEL

SUBURBAN sprawl, the spread of low-density housing over an ever-expanding landscape, has attracted a growing list of enemies. Environmentalists have long decried the effects of sprawl on the ecosystem; aesthetes have long derided what they saw as "the ugliness and banality of suburbia"; and liberals have intermittently insisted that suburban prosperity has been purchased at the price of inner-city decline and poverty. But only recently has sprawl become the next great issue in American public life. That's because suburbanites themselves are now calling for limits to seemingly inexorable and frenetic development.

Slow-growth movements are a response to both the cyclical swings of the economy and the secular trend of dispersal. Each of the great postwar booms have, at their cyclical peak, produced calls for restraint. These sentiments have gained a wider hearing as each new upturn of the economy has produced an ever widening wave of exurban growth. A record 96 months of peacetime economic expansion has produced the

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strongest slow-growth movement to date. In 1998, antisprawl environmentalists and "not-in-my-backyard" slow-growth suburbanites joined forces across the nation to pass ballot measures restricting exurban growth.

Undoubtedly, the loss of land and the environmental degradation produced by sprawl are serious problems that demand public attention. But sprawl also brings enormous benefits as well as considerable costs. It is, in part, an expression of the new high-tech economy whose campus-like office parks on the periphery of urban areas have driven the economic boom of the 1990s. And it's sprawl that has sustained the record rise in home ownership. Sprawl is not some malignancy to be summarily excised but, rather, part and parcel of prosperity. Dealing with its ill effects requires both an understanding of the new landscape of the American economy and a willingness to make subtle trade-offs. We must learn to curb its worst effects without reducing the wealth and freedom that permit sprawl to develop.

Rising incomes and employment, combined with declining interest rates, have allowed a record number of people, including minority and immigrant families, to purchase homes for the first time. Home ownership among blacks, which is increasingly suburban, has risen at more than three times the white rate; a record 45 percent of African Americans owned their own homes in 1998. Nationally, an unprecedented 67 percent of Americans are homeowners.

Sprawl is part of the price we're paying for something novel in human history—the creation of a mass upper middle class. Net household worth has been increasing at the unparalleled annual rate of 10 percent since 1994, so that while in 1970, only 3.2 percent of households had an annual income of $100,000 (in today's dollars), by 1996, 8.2 percent of American households could boast a six-figure annual income. The new prosperity is reflected in the size of new homes, many of whose owners no doubt decry the arrival of still more "McMansions" and new residents, clogging the roads and schools of the latest subdivisions. In the midst of the 1980's boom, homebuilders didn't have a category for mass-produced houses of more than 3,000 square feet: By 1996, one out of every seven new homes built was larger than 3,000 square feet.

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Today's tenement trail

Sprawl also reflects upward mobility for the aspiring lower-middle class. Nearly a half-century ago, Samuel Lubell dedicated *The Future of American Politics* to the memory of his mother, "who pioneered on the urban frontier." Lubell described a process parallel to the settling of the West, in which families on "the Old Tenement Trail" were continually on the move in search of a better life. In the cities, they abandoned crowded tenements on New York's Lower East Side for better housing in the South Bronx, and from there, went to the "West Bronx, crossing that Great Social Divide—the Grand Concourse—beyond which rolled true middle-class country where janitors were called superintendents."

Today's "tenement trail" takes aspiring working- and lower-middle class Americans to quite different areas. Kendall, Florida, 20 miles southeast of Miami, is every environmentalist's nightmare image of sprawl, a giant grid carved out of the muck of swamp land that encroaches on the Everglades. Stripmalls and mega-stores abound for mile after mile, as do the area's signature giant auto lots. Yet Kendall also represents a late-twentieth-century version of the Old Tenement Trail. Kendall, notes the *New Republic*'s Charles Lane, is "the Queens of the late twentieth century," a place where immigrants are buying into America. Carved out of the palmetto wilderness, its population exploded from roughly 20,000 in 1970 to 300,000 today. Agricultural in the 1960s, and a hip place for young whites in the 1970s, Kendall grew increasingly Hispanic in the 1980s, as Cubans, Nicaraguans, and others who arrived with very little worked their way up. Today, it's half Hispanic and a remarkable example of integration. In most of Kendall, notes University of Miami geographer Peter Muller, "You can't point to a white or Latino block because the populations are so intermixed."

Virginia Postrel, the editor of *Reason*, argues that the slow-growth movement is animated by left-wing planners' hostility to suburbia. Others mock slow-growthers as elitists, as in the following quip:

> Q: What's the difference between an environmentalist and a developer?

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A: The environmentalist already has his house in the mountains.

But, in the 1990s, slow-growth sentiment has been taking hold in middle- and working-class suburbs like Kendall, as development turns into overdevelopment and traffic congestion becomes a daily problem.

Regional government

One oft-proposed answer to sprawl has been larger regional governments that will exercise a monopoly on land-use decisions. Underlying this solution is the theory—no doubt correct—that sprawl is produced when individuals and townships seek to maximize their own advantage without regard for the good of the whole community. Regionalism, however, is stronger in logic than in practice. For example, the people of Kendall, rather than embracing regionalism, are looking to slow down growth by *seceding* from their regional government. Upon examination, we begin to see some of the problems with regional government.

Kendall is part of Metro-Dade, the oldest major regional government, created in 1957. The largest of its 29 municipalities, Miami, the fourth poorest city in the United States, has 350,000 people; the total population of Metro-Dade is 2 million, 1.1 million of whom live in unincorporated areas.

In Metro-Dade, antisprawl and antiregional government sentiments merge. Despite county-imposed growth boundaries, residents have complained bitterly of overdevelopment. The county commissioners—many of whom have been convicted of, or charged with, corruption—have been highly receptive to the developers who are among their largest campaign contributors. As one south Florida resident said of the developers, "It's a lot cheaper to be able to buy just one government." The south Florida secessionists want to return zoning to local control where developers' clout is less likely to overwhelm neighborhood interests.

When Jane Jacobs wrote, in *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, that "the voters sensibly decline to federate into a system where bigness means local helplessness, ruthless oversimplified planning and administrative chaos," she could have been writing about south Florida. What's striking about

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Metro-Dade is that it has delivered neither efficiency nor equity nor effective planning while squelching local self-determination.

The fight over Metro-Dade echoes the conflicts of an earlier era. Historically, the fight over regional versus local government was an important, if intermittent, issue for many cities from 1910 to 1970. From about 1850 to 1910, according to urban historian Jon Teaford, suburbanites were eager to be absorbed by cities whose wealth enabled them to build the water, sewage, and road systems they couldn't construct on their own. "The central city," he explains, "provided superior service at a lower cost." But, in the 1920s, well before race became a central issue, suburbanites, who had increasingly sorted themselves out by ethnicity and class, began to use special-service districts and innovative financial methods to provide their own infrastructure and turned away from unification. Suburbanites also denounced consolidation as an invitation to big-city, and often Catholic, "boss rule" and as a threat to "self-government."

In the 1960s, as black politicians began to win influence over big-city governments, they also joined the anticonsolidation chorus. At the same time, county government, once a sleepy extension of rural rule, was modernized, and county executives essentially became the mayors of full-service governments administering what were, in effect, dispersed cities. But they were mayors with a difference. Their constituents often wanted a balance between commercial development, which constrained the rise of taxes, and the suburban ideal of family-friendly semirural living. When development seemed too intrusive, suburban voters in the 1980s, and again in the 1990s, have pushed a slow-growth agenda.

The new regionalism

In the 1990s, regionalism has been revived as an effort to link the problem of sprawl with the problem of inner-city poverty. Assuming that "flight creates blight," regionalists propose to recapture the revenue of those who have fled the cities and force growth back into older areas by creating regional or metropolitan-area governments with control over land use and taxation.

The new regionalism owes a great deal to a group of cir-

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cuit-riding reformers. Inspired by the arguments of scholars like Anthony Downs, one of the authors of the Kerner Commission report, and sociologist William Julius Wilson of Harvard, as well as the example of Portland, Oregon's metro-wide government, these itinerant preachers have traveled to hundreds of cities to spread the gospel of regional cooperation. The three most prominent new regionalists—columnist Neil Peirce, former Albuquerque mayor David Rusk, and Minnesota state representative Myron Orfield—have developed a series of distinct, but overlapping, arguments for why cities can't help themselves, and why regional solutions are necessary.

Peirce, in his book *Citistates*, plausibly insists that regions are the real units of competition in the global economy, so that there is a metro-wide imperative to revive the central city, lest the entire area be undermined. Less plausibly, Orfield in *Metropolitics* argues that what he calls "the favored quarter" of fast-growing suburbs on the periphery of the metro area have prospered at the expense of both the central city and the inner-ring suburbs. In order both to revive the central city and save the inner suburbs from decline, Orfield proposes that these two areas join forces, redistributing money from the "favored quarter" to the older areas. Rusk argues, in *Baltimore Unbound*, that older cities, unable to annex the fast growing suburbs, are doomed to further decline. He insists that only "flexible cities"—that is, cities capable of expanding geographically and capturing the wealth of the suburbs—can truly deal with inner-city black poverty. Regionalism, writes Rusk, is "the new civil rights movement."

There are differences among them. Orfield and, to a lesser degree, Rusk operate on a zero-sum model in which gain for the suburbs comes directly at the expense of the central city. Peirce is less radical, proposing regional cooperation as the means to a win-win situation for both city and the surrounding region. But they all share a desire to disperse poverty across the region and, more importantly, recentralize economic growth in the already built-up areas. The latter goal is consistent with both the environmental thrust of the antisprawl movement and the push for regional government. In a speech to a Kansas City civic organization, Rusk laid out the central assumption of the new regionalism. "The greater the fragmenta-

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tion of governments," he asserted, "the greater the fragmentation of society by race and economic class." Fewer governments, argue the new regionalists, will yield a number of benefits, including better opportunities for regional cooperation, more money for cash-strapped central cities, less racial inequality, less sprawl, and greater economic growth. However, all of these propositions are questionable.

Better policies, not fewer governments

Consider Baltimore and Philadelphia, cities that the regionalists have studied thoroughly. According to the 1998 *Greater Baltimore State of the Region* report, Philadelphia has 877 units of local government (including school boards)—or 17.8 per 100,000 people. Baltimore has only six government units of any consequence in Baltimore City and the five surrounding counties—or 2.8 per 100,000 people. Greater Baltimore has fewer government units than any other major metro area in the United States. As a political analyst told me: "Get six people in a room, and you have the government of 2,200 square miles, because the county execs have very strong powers." We might expect considerable regional cooperation in Baltimore, but not in Philadelphia. Regionalism has made no headway in either city, however. The failure has little to do with the number of governments and a great deal to do with failed policy choices in both cities.

Rusk does not mention the many failings of Baltimore's city government. He refers to the current mayor, Kurt Schmoke, just once and only to say that Baltimore has had "excellent political leadership." In Rusk's view, Baltimore is "programmed to fail" because of factors entirely beyond its control, namely, the inability to annex its successful suburbs. In the ahistorical world of the regionalist (and here, Peirce is a partial exception), people are always pulled from the city by structural forces but never pushed from the city by bad policies.

Baltimore is not as well financed as the District of Columbia, which ruined itself despite a surfeit of money. But Baltimore, a favorite political son of both Annapolis and Washington, has been blessed with abundant financial support. Over the past decade, Schmoke has increased spending on education and health by over a half-billion dollars. He has also

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added 200 police officers and spent $60 million more for police over the last four years. "His greatest skill," notes the *Baltimore Sun*, "has been his ability to attract more federal and state aid while subsidies diminished elsewhere." But, notwithstanding these expenditures, middle-class families continue to flee the city at the rate of 1,000 per month, helping to produce the sprawl environmentalists decry.

Little in Baltimore works well. The schools have been taken over by the state, while the Housing Authority is mired in perpetual scandal and corruption. Baltimore is one of the few cities where crime hasn't gone down. That's because Schmoke has insisted, contrary to the experiences of New York and other cities, that drug-related crime could not be reduced until drug use was controlled through treatment. The upshot is that New York, with eight times more people than Baltimore, has only twice as many murders. Baltimore also leads the country in sexually transmitted diseases. These diseases have flourished among the city's drug users partly owing to Schmoke's de facto decriminalization of drugs. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Baltimore has a syphilis rate 18 times the national average, 3 or 4 times as high as areas where the STD epidemic is most concentrated.

Flexible cities

Rusk attributes extraordinary qualities to flexible cities. He says that they are able to both reduce inequality, curb sprawl, and maintain vital downtowns. Rusk was the mayor of Albuquerque, a flexible city that annexed a vast area, even as its downtown essentially died. The reduced inequality he speaks of is largely a statistical artifact. If New York were to annex Scarsdale, East New York's average income would rise without having any effect on the lives of the people who live there. As for sprawl, flexible cities like Phoenix and Houston are hardly models.

A recent article for *Urban Affairs Review*, by Subhrajit Guhathakurta and Michele Wichert, showed that within the elastic city of Phoenix, inner-city residents poorer than their outer-ring neighbors are subsidizing the building of new developments on the fringes of the metropolis. While sprawl is

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correlated with downtown decline in Albuquerque, in Phoenix it's connected with what *Fortune* described as "the remarkable rebound of downtown Phoenix, which has become a chic after-dark destination as well as a residential hot spot." There seems to be no automatic connection between regionalism and downtown revival.

Orfield's *Metropolitics* provides another version of an overdetermined structuralist argument. According to him, the favored quarter is sucking the inner city dry, and, as a result, central-city blight will inevitably engulf the older first-ring suburbs as well. He is right to see strong pressures on the inner-ring suburbs, stemming from an aging housing stock and population as well as an influx of inner-city poor. But it is how the inner-ring suburbs respond to these pressures that will affect their fate.

When Coleman Young was mayor of Detroit, large sections of the city returned to prairie. But the inner-ring suburbs have done fairly well precisely by not imitating Detroit's practice of providing poor services at premium prices. "Much like the new edge suburbs," explains the *Detroit News*, "older suburbs that follow the proven formula of promoting good schools, public safety and well-kept housing attract new investment." Suburban Mayor Michael Guido sees his city's well developed infrastructure as an asset, which has already been bought and paid for. "Now," says Mayor Guido, "it's a matter of maintenance ... and we offer a sense of history and a sense of community. That's really important to people, to have a sense of belonging to a whole community rather than a subdivision."

Suburb power

City-suburban relations are not fixed; they are various depending on the policies both follow. Some suburbs compete with the central city for business. In south Florida, Coral Gables more than holds its own with Miami as a site for business headquarters. Southfield, just outside Detroit, and Clayton, just outside St. Louis, blossomed in the wake of the 1960s' urban riots and now compete with their downtowns. Aurora, with a population of more than 160,000 and to the east of Denver, sees itself as a competitor, and it sees re-

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gional efforts at growth management as a means by which the downtown Denver elite can ward off competition.

Suburban growth can also help the central city. In the Philadelphia area, economic growth and new work come largely from the Route 202 high-tech corridor in Chester County, west of the city. While the city has lost 57,000 jobs, even in the midst of national economic prosperity, the fast growing Route 202 companies have been an important source of downtown legal and accounting jobs. At the same time, the suburbs are creating jobs for residents that the central city cannot produce, so that 20 percent of city residents commute to the suburbs while 15 percent of people who live in the suburbs commute to Philadelphia.

The "new regionalists" assume that the prosperity of the edge cities is a function of inner-city decline. But, in many cities, it is more nearly the case that suburban booms are part of what's keeping the central-city economy alive. It is the edge cities that have taken up the time-honored urban task of creating new work.

According to *INC* magazine, the 500 fastest growing small companies are all located in suburbs and exurbs. This is because local governments there are very responsive to the needs of start-up companies. These high-tech hotbeds, dubbed "nerdistans" by Joel Kotkin, are composed of networks of companies that are sometimes partners, sometimes competitors. They provide a pool of seasoned talent for start-ups, where engineers and techies who prefer the orderly, outdoor life of suburbia to the crowds and disorder of the city can move from project to project. Henry Nicholas, CEO of Broadcom, a communications-chip and cable-modem maker, explained why he reluctantly moved to Irvine: "It's hard to relocate techies to LA. It's the congestion, the expensive housing—and there's a certain stigma to it."

Imagine what the United States would be like if the Bay Area had followed the New York model. In 1898, New York created the first regional government when it consolidated all the areas of the New York harbor—Manhattan, Brooklyn, Queens, the Bronx, and Staten Island—into the then-largest city in the world. The consolidation has worked splendidly for Manhattan, which thrives as a capital of high-end financial

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and legal services. But over time, the Manhattan-centric economy based on high taxes, heavy social spending, and extensive economic regulation destroyed Brooklyn's once vital shipping and manufacturing economy.

In 1912, San Francisco, the Manhattan of Northern California, proposed to create a unified regional government by incorporating Oakland in the East Bay and San Jose in the South. The plan for a Greater San Francisco was modeled on Greater New York and called for the creation of self-governing boroughs within an enlarged city and county of San Francisco. East Bay opposition defeated the San Francisco expansion in the legislature, and later attempts at consolidation in 1917, 1923, and 1928 also failed. But had San Francisco with its traditions of high taxation and heavy regulation succeeded, Silicon Valley might never have become one of the engines of the American economy. Similarly, it's no accident that the Massachusetts Route 128 high-tech corridor is located outside of the boundaries of Boston, even as it enriches the central city.

The Portland model

The complex and often ironic history of existing regional governments has been obscured by the bright light of hope emanating from Portland. It seems that in every generation one city is said to have perfected the magic elixir for revival. In the 1950s, it was Philadelphia; today, it's Portland. In recent years, hundreds of city officials have traveled to Portland to study its metropolitan government, comprehensive environmental planning, and the urban-growth boundary that has been credited with Portland's revival and success.

While there are important lessons to be learned from Portland, very little of its success to date can be directly attributed to the growth boundary, which was introduced too recently and with boundaries so capacious as not yet to have had much effect. Thirty-five percent of the land within the boundary was vacant when it was imposed in 1979. And, at the same time, fast growing Clark County, just north of Portland but not part of the urban-growth boundary, has provided an escape valve for potential housing pressures. The upshot, notes demographer Wendell Cox, is that even with the growth boundary, Portland still re-

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mains a relatively low-density area with fewer people per square mile than San Diego, San Jose, or Sacramento.

Portland has also been run with honesty and efficiency, unlike Metro-Dade. Blessed with great natural resources, Portland—sometimes dubbed "Silicon forest," because chipmakers are drawn to its vast quantities of cheap clean water—has conserved its man-made as well as natural resources. A city with more cast-iron buildings than any place outside of Manhattan, it has been a leader in historic preservation. Time and again, Portland's leadership has made the right choices. It was one of the first cities to reconnect its downtown with the riverfront. Portland never built a circumferential freeway. And, in the 1970s, under the leadership of mayor Neil Goldschmidt, the city vetoed a number of proposed highway projects that would have threatened the downtown.

In 1978, Portland voters, in conjunction with the state government, created the first directly elected metropolitan government with the power to manage growth over three counties. Portland metro government has banned big-box retailers, like Walmart and Price Club, on the grounds that they demand too much space and encourage too much driving. This is certainly an interesting experiment well worth watching, but should other cities emulate Portland's land-management model? It's too soon to say.

Good government is always important. But aside from that, it's hard to draw any general lessons from the Portland experience. The growth boundaries may or may not work, and there's certainly no reason to think that playing with political boundaries will bring good government to Baltimore.

Living with sprawl

What then is to be done? First, we can accept the consensus that has developed around preserving open space, despite some contradictory effects. The greenbelts around London, Portland, and Baltimore County pushed some development back toward the city and encouraged further sprawl as growth leapfrogged the open space. The push to preserve open space is only likely to grow stronger as continued growth generates both more congestion and more wealth, which can be used to buy up open land.

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Secondly, we can create what Peter Salins, writing in *The Public Interest*,[1] described as a "level playing field" between the central cities and the suburbs. This can be done by ending exurban growth subsidies for both transportation as well as new water and sewer lines. These measures might further encourage the revival of interest in old fashioned Main Street living, which is already attracting a new niche of home buyers. State and local governments can also repeal the land-use and zoning regulations that discourage mixed-use development of the sort that produces a clustering of housing around Main Street and unsubsidized low-cost housing in the apartments above the streets' shops.

Because of our strong traditions of local self-government, regionalism has been described as an unnatural act among consenting jurisdictions. But regional cooperation needn't mean the heavy hand of all-encompassing regional government. There are some modest, but promising, experiments already under way in regional revenue sharing whose effects should be carefully evaluated. Allegheny County, which includes Pittsburgh, has created a Regional Asset District that uses a 1 percent sales tax increase to support cultural institutions and reduce other taxes. The Twin Cities have put money derived from the increase in assessed value of commercial and industrial properties into a pot to aid fiscally weaker municipalities. Kansas and Missouri created a cultural district that levies a small increase in the sales tax across the region. The money is being used to rehabilitate the area's most treasured architectural landmark, Kansas City's Union Station.

Cities and suburbs do have some shared interests, as in the growing practice of reverse commuting which links inner-city residents looking to get off welfare with fast growing suburban areas hampered by a shortage of labor. Regionalism can curb sprawl and integrate and sustain central-city populations if it reforms the misguided policies and politics that have sent the black and white middle class streaming out of cities like Baltimore, Washington, and Philadelphia. Regional co-operation between the sprawling high-tech suburbs and the central cities could modernize cities that are in danger of being left

[1] "Cities, Suburbs, and the Urban Crisis," *The Public Interest*, No. 113 (Fall 1993).

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further behind by the digital economy. In that vein, the District of Columbia's Mayor Anthony Williams has seized on the importance of connecting his welfare population with the fast growing areas of Fairfax County in Northern Virginia. The aim of focused regional policies, argues former HUD Undersecretary Marc Weiss, should be economic, not political, integration.

Sprawl isn't some malignancy that can be surgically removed. It's been part and parcel of healthy growth, and curbing it involves difficult tradeoffs best worked out locally. Sprawl and the movement against sprawl are now a permanent part of the landscape. The future is summed up in a quip attributed to former Oregon Governor Tom McCall, who was instrumental in creating Portland's growth boundary. "Oregonians," he said, "are against two things: sprawl and density."

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Cultural meltdown

JAMES Q. WILSON

BY "The Great Disruption," Frank Fukuyama means the social transformations—many of them unfortunate—that occurred throughout the Western world in the 1960s and 1970s. He begins his book with a survey of increasing crime rates, the declining number of intact families, rising divorce rates, dropping fertility rates, and vanishing popular confidence in government—all of which suggest to him a loss in moral order and social capital. This, of course, is familiar territory.

Two arguments in *The Great Disruption: Human Nature and the Reconstitution of Social Order*[†] stand out, however. One has to do with the source of the great disruption, the other with what may become of that disruption in the future. Let me start with the second, because there I think he is quite right.

Fukuyama believes that social capital and social order cannot simply disappear. The Great Disruption will be replaced to some degree by a Great Reconstruction. The restoration of some measure of social capital will occur because there is a floor of sorts below which human society cannot fall. That floor is made up of human nature. People are inherently sociable—they value human contact. They are also inherently familial—they belong and respond to families, whatever the condition of those families may be.

Because they are inherently social, people will live together in communities over long periods of time. If people regularly deal with one another, they can solve certain problems that each acting alone cannot solve. We cooperate with one another not because we could not do better by pursuing our own interests but because we must live with people who also have interests. The famous game, the Prisoner's Dilemma, is easily solved if it is repeated among the same people. The partici-

† Free Press. 304 pp. $26.00.

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pants quickly realize that they will do better if their first move is a kind one—say, keeping a promise, obeying a contract, protecting a friend—followed by moves in which they copy whatever the other person does. Both sides realize that being nice to one another pays off better than taking advantage of one another because a bad move by one player will be followed by a bad move by the other. This strategy, called Tit for Tat, is not the only solution to the game, but it is the one that ordinary people, in regular contact with one another, will choose.

YOU need not study game theory to appreciate sociability. We are kinder to people we know than to people we do not know. We may be ruder to family members than to strangers, but we take in family members, and not strangers, when they are in distress. As the old adage has it, home is where, if you go there, they have to take you in. We fight hard to defend our buddies in the platoon even though throwing down our guns and running the other way may make us safer. We support whatever team we join—on athletic fields, in fraternities, in street-corner gangs, in armies—even when we do not know the other team members very well.

There is, of course, a dark side to our sociability. We can be led by it to commit atrocities in the name of friendship, fight unjust wars in the name of patriotism, and attack innocent people in the name of gang solidarity. But the root of our sociability—caring for our infants and protecting them as they grow older—is inherently desirable, and thus is something that people will not easily surrender. We may for awhile tolerate single-parent homes in the name of freedom of choice, but in time, we will fight back when the costs of freedom become too high. We may explain away crime as the result of impersonal social forces, but in time, we will begin to define it as an evil choice that society must stigmatize and resist. No matter how willing we are to provide equal treatment to women, or to regard children as miniature adults, when a crisis occurs our instinct will be to protect the women and children.

Fukuyama does not use all of the examples I have given, but I suspect he would agree with my argument, one that I think he has made. For example, consider how society solves the problem of the tragedy of the commons. On a plot of open land, many farmers send their cattle to graze. Each farmer is tempted to let his cattle graze all they want, even though if every farmer pursues such a strategy, the pasture will soon be destroyed. Many people think that this problem can be solved

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only by a government that coerces the farmers with formal rules. But as Fukuyama notes, Elinor Ostrom has gathered thousands of accounts of this problem and shown that the solution has chiefly depended on informal norms and village habits.

Fukuyama is saying that the Great Disruption can go only so far before society—that is, individual people—will correct the imbalance and reassert a common morality. He is right about this, though he may be too optimistic in his estimates of how much progress has been made in recent years toward social renewal. He says that in the United States, "levels of crime have returned virtually to where they were when the Great Disruption started." I am afraid not. The robbery rate in 1996 was three times higher than the robbery rate in 1960. If anyone were told in 1960 that crime rates would be under control when that rate had tripled, he would have been thought mad. Fukuyama takes comfort in Farrakhan's Million Man March in Washington and the advent of the Promise Keepers, but it is not clear that either movement has had much effect. He notes the popularity of the radio talk show hosted by Laura Schlessinger—a no-nonsense woman who encourages marriage and self-control—but he says nothing about the national media's hostility toward her.

DESPITE these reservations, I agree that some kind of "renorming" of society will occur, at least to some degree, which will moderate the effects of the Great Disruption. But I do not agree with Fukuyama's explanation of why the Great Disruption occurred. In reviewing the causes of the Great Disruption, Fukuyama correctly rejects some of the fashionable explanations. We cannot say that cultural rot was produced by government policies or by poverty and inequality. The former rarely make (or unmake) a culture; the latter factors do not fit the facts. Crime rates have shot up in countries such as Sweden where there is much less poverty and inequality than in the United States.

The real blame, the author seems to say, lies in the spread of information technology and a change in the status of women. His argument is this: The shift from "an industrial to an information economy," which substituted "mental for physical labor, information for material product, services for manufacturing," and the advent of certain technologies that helped prolong life and control reproduction, "laid the basis for an enormous shift in gender roles that has taken place in the second

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half of the twentieth century." When women could obtain good jobs, divorce and extramarital child-rearing became tolerable, since women could now support themselves. The legalization of abortion and the invention of the birth-control pill emancipated men from marital commitments and encouraged greater promiscuity. Women no longer needed men, and men no longer needed women. The two forces combined to weaken families, heighten individualism, and loosen social ties.

ALL of these changes no doubt played a part in the profound transformation we have witnessed in society, but they are only part of the story, and a rather recent part at that. The visible signs of the Great Disruption began, I believe, around 1963 when, after a long period of stability, crime rates began to explode. Between 1960 and 1970, the homicide rate doubled. Around that time there was also a great increase in out-of-wedlock birth rates. In 1960, 8 percent of all children were living with only a mother; this increased by 30 percent during the 1960s. Worse, the number of children living with a never-married mother increased by 62 percent in that same decade.

These changes occurred even though the unemployment rate was low and long before there had been a profound change in sexual roles. Though Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* was published in 1963, her message about women's liberation, at first, affected only upper-middle-class women who read such books. In 1960, the percentage of married women in the labor force was less than 32 percent; it was not until 1980 that it had passed 50 percent. And it is hard to imagine that it was a theoretical argument about sexual roles that was producing a dramatic increase in out-of-wedlock births to poor women.

There was, of course, a shift in employment away from manufacturing, but it did not produce an increase in employment in information technology until well after the 1960s. It is hard to be precise about this because most studies of employment do not have a category, "information technology." But, as a rough guess, consider employment in computer and data-processing firms. The number did not exceed one million until about 1995; as late as 1980, there were fewer than a quarter million workers in such firms. By contrast, in 1980, there were more than 39 million people employed in agriculture, mining, construction, manufacturing, and transportation.

Perhaps these changes in sexual roles and economic activity

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can be linked to the Great Disruption, but Fukuyama does not provide clear evidence for this view. He asserts that these changes exist, but does not show how, or on whom, they work.

I HAVE a different view of the cause of the Great Disruption and, like Fukuyama, I cannot prove that my view is right. To me, the social disruptions, though they occurred suddenly, were the manifestation of a broad and long-term cultural change. It began, as Gertrude Himmelfarb has noted in *The De-Moralization of Society*, with the slow but steady abandonment of the Victorian ethos of nineteenth-century England and America, an ethos that almost surely contributed powerfully to the decline in crime and alcoholism at a time—the second half of the nineteenth century—when both countries were undergoing a radical economic revolution: the rise of industrialism, the movement of people from the countryside to the cities, and (in America) the arrival of a flood of poor immigrants.

Though he recognizes the importance of culture in discussing Japan, Fukuyama argues against it as the cause of the Great Disruption in Western nations during the 1960s and 1970s. His main argument is that culture changes too slowly to explain any sudden explosion of social disorder. But he does not explain why this is the case. I think it can change quite rapidly. In the 1950s, American students were docile (*Time* magazine called them the "silent generation"), classroom teachers were rarely challenged, crime rates were low, and shotgun marriages were common. Within a decade or so that had all changed. Students became protesters, classroom teachers were defied, crime rates shot up, and shotgun marriages were replaced by out-of-wedlock births.

The reason culture can change quickly is that much of it is produced by social elites who are easily drawn to new ideas and adventuresome practices. In England and America, changes had begun around the turn of the century and had come into full flower by the end of the First World War. The Bloomsbury set had replaced Queen Victoria, resistance to war had replaced habitual patriotism, and writers argued that crime was the result of social injustice rather than a weak human nature. By the 1940s, artists and musicians had taken up heroin, just as in the 1960s they took up marijuana and in the 1970s and 1980s they took up cocaine.

At first, ordinary people continued in their customary cultural patterns. They flirted with sexual expression and personal liberation in the 1920s, but soon the Great Depression and the

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Second World War put an end to those adventures. Those two decades—the 1930s and the 1940s—could be called the Great Timeout: a two-decade interruption in the process of self-liberation. But when the war ended, and as the children of the Baby Boom reached adolescence, self-liberation returned with a vengeance and the Great Disruption was born. This produced many good things—for example, a concern for civil rights—but many bad ones, too.

The tragedy for ordinary people, as Myron Magnet has pointed out in *The Dream and the Nightmare*, is that they often lack the resources with which to fight back against decadence. The rich can afford psychotherapy and drug treatment programs; the poor cannot. The rich can use gates and guards to protect their homes; the poor cannot. The rich can send their children to good private schools; the poor cannot. And so social elites can more readily cope with the defects of contemporary society while the poor, and much of the middle class, must await the slow reemergence of a more virtuous culture.

IN short, I believe that the Great Disruption was born at the turn of the century but only affected ordinary lives after the Great Timeout. I cannot prove this any more than Fukuyama can prove that it was a change in sexual roles and the rise of information technology that produced what we see about us. But we can certainly agree—again, alas, without proof—that, in time, ordinary people will reclaim part of an older culture and so permit the better parts of our nature to dominate the wicked ones.

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Judging democratic art

ALVIN KERNAN

FEW ideas have had more staying power than that of Art as an absolute—a permanent human reality, psychological or cultural, or both. It is commonplace to speak, for example, of the *art* of early painters of bison and mammoths in the caves of Lascaux, of the *art* of the fugue, and of the *art* of television, as if art were a permanent and unchanging human activity, expressing itself in different media over time but crystal perfect in its motives, its formal characteristics, and its functions. Museums make this Platonic concept of Art real by removing various objects from their original setting and assembling them in one place. In their original provenance, these objects served very different purposes: ritual masks, portraits of ancestors, tapestries, cult statues, sacred vessels, etc. But when they are merged with the paintings of Jackson Pollock, the brass statues of Brancusi, and other objects consciously designed as art, one gets Art, in the museum at least. Aesthetics, in the Kantian manner, systematize Art, laying down its formal characteristics and defining its motives and functions.

Democracy and the Arts,† a collection of essays by various authors, describes the effects of late-twentieth-century "hyper-democracy" on the arts. With few exceptions, the authors assume the aesthetic view that there are modest but permanent standards, distilled from the history of Western art, by which all art in all times is properly judged. The authors are leaders in their respective fields: Robert Brustein on theater, Carroll Westfall on architecture, John Rockwell on "serious music," John Simon on film, Anne Hollander on fashion, Stanley Crouch on jazz, as well as others. And, almost without exception, they conclude that the radical "hyper-democracy" of late-twentieth-century America has had an invidious effect on the arts. The

† Cornell University Press. 220 pp. $25.00.

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museum no longer serves its traditional function of reifying art, Arthur Danto tells us, since contemporary art's "primary ambitions are not aesthetic ... it seeks a more immediate contact with people than the museum makes possible." None of the other essayists goes so far as Westfall, speaking of modernist architecture reaching "its fullest potential as a nihilistic art serving morally impassive regimes," but they all lament the lack of "seriousness" and "deep views of humanity" in today's arts. Brustein, writing of the theater, speaks of "a major retreat—the surrender of most of the standards and values that make a serious culture possible."

THE Israeli novelist, A. B. Yehoshua, by way of another example, argues that the novels of the late twentieth century have failed because they lack heroes, because they do not fulfill "the extensive human solidarity that a great novel needs to convey to the reader," and cannot express the sense of "elitist destiny" that writers need to feel "in order to have something meaningful to say to the world."

Simon, writing acidly and wittily, as always, believes that while it might be possible for movies to be art, film regularly fails to reach this status because it is the most democratic of mediums, subject absolutely to "the tyranny of the box office.... It is not in dinosaur movies that the intricacies of the human soul will be scrutinized." Mass democracy, most of the writers in this volume conclude, has turned "the whole [art] game into a costume party," as Hollander, not altogether disapprovingly, remarks in connection with fashion. Simon goes so far as to posit an inevitable conflict between art and democracy when he remarks that true art is now, and always has been, "not democratic, not egalitarian: art is inherently elitist, exclusionary, despotic."

The quarrel between art and democracy is an old one, going back to the Industrial Revolution and the beginnings of romantic art in the late eighteenth century. Human sensibility, so the theory goes, was so outraged by the smokestacks, the grimy factories, the slums of Coketown, that in protest the arts went, as it were, on permanent strike against the ways of life and thinking that characterized the bourgeoisie.

In earlier times, when the artist was supported by patronage, art reinforced the dominant social values, and we got the buildings of Palladio, the music of Handel, the paintings of Velazquez, and the plays of Racine. But, once art conceived of its function as radical criticism of the dominant social order,

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we got poets like Shelley and Baudelaire, architects like Pugin, playwrights like Ibsen, and painters like Van Gogh. William Morris spoke for all romantic artists when he said that "apart from the desire to produce beautiful things, the leading passion of my life has been and is hatred of modern civilization." Artists who support middle-class social values and American optimism, like Norman Rockwell, to take an extreme case, have gotten very short shrift in the art world.

IN the view of the writers in *Art and Democracy*, art is an unchanging light in a changing world. But, in fact, the definition of art cannot be dissociated from history. The word "art" was itself long synonymous with tradecraft and mechanic skills. The core of our Western conception of what might be called the "fine arts"—e.g., poetry, painting, music, dance, and architecture—took shape in the mid eighteenth century. The critic Paul Oskar Kristeller gave this historical understanding of art its classical statement:

> The various arts are certainly as old as human civilization, but the manner in which we are accustomed to group them and to assign them a place in our scheme of life and of culture is comparatively recent. This fact is not as strange as may appear on the surface. In the course of history, the various arts change not only their content and style, but also their relations to each other, and their place in the general system of culture, as do religion, philosophy or science. Our familiar system of the five fine arts did not merely originate in the eighteenth century, it also reflects particular cultural and social conditions of that time.

According to this historical view of art, each time and place will create its own arts and its own way of judging them. And when we look at the American art scene in the late twentieth century, we find that it has created its own democratic art. The old "fine arts" persist, of course—barely if we are to believe Brustein and Simon; but they have been marginalized or degraded by the pressures of a democratic society. The work of many of our novelists—for example, Nabokov, A.S. Byatt, or Tom Wolfe—are surely as "serious" as Dickens and Flaubert. But their books remain entertainment, rather than literature, because society seems to lack the interest or the energy any longer to make literature. Life has gone out of the printed word as people read less and less. Theater has become obsolescent under the pressures of television and the movies. Painting is a commodity in a high-finance art market. Sculpture has adapted with site-specific sculptors, like Richard Serra,

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whose creations block our streets, and installation artists, who fill rooms with dirt and pile up bricks sprinkled with dog turds. Perhaps the only fine art that has flourished in late-twentieth-century democracy is dance, and it has done so by identifying with homosexual politics and eroticism. Walter Benjamin was right when he predicted, in "The Work of Art in an Age of Mechanical Reproduction," that new technologies of mass reproduction would strip the "aura" from the older masterpieces of art. I have never been able to understand why a Marxist like Benjamin should object to making art available to the masses. Still, the mixture of proletarian politics and aristocratic tastes in art is not unfamiliar.

The real artistic energy of modern democracy expresses itself in what the old aesthetic order once scorned as "pop art" or "kitsch." Many of these arts—photography, films, television, amplified rock music, advertising (say some), and even computer games—are the products of modern technology, which satisfy, far better than the old authoritarian arts, the prime democratic value of "the Many." Modern production methods make these new arts available to everyone in cheap mass market forms that are frequently participatory or "interactive." Since democratic art is available to all, everyone is qualified to criticize it, and in many cases—photography or computer games, for example—to produce it themselves.

One of the writers in *Democracy and the Arts*, Paul Cantor, aware that the new democratic arts are primarily communicative rather than aesthetic, intriguingly suggests that recent philosophies such as "postmodernism" and "deconstruction" provide "the aesthetic logic of democracy." Postmodernism, Cantor argues, "accepts the radical historicity of all art," favors a "weakening sense of reality," and politicizes art by deconstructing "the difference between master and slave." Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* is Cantor's copy text, and while it is scarcely a piece of folk writing, it does reveal, at a high aesthetic level, the primary characteristics of the postmodernist art of our time.

IT is possible to feel, as I do, that we have to accept that each culture and time creates its own art. But that does not mean we must believe that whatever history brings in the way of art is all for the good. Cultures create debased and even harmful arts as well as noble ones. The best way, however, of judging their quality is not, I think, the application of the standards of other ages, such as the Arnoldian "high seri-

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ousness" employed by the writers in *Democracy and the Arts* to criticize democratic art. Rather, it would be more realistic to ask, "How well do the arts of a particular time serve the society which creates them?" In the case of the arts of hyper-democracy—arts in which anything goes and total freedom of expression is guaranteed by the courts—the answer to this question is deeply troubling.

Violence is the issue at the moment. Violence of an almost unthinkable kind in our secondary schools has forced us to question the relentless fire power of our movies, the brutality of our television, the virtual killing fields of our computer games, and the revolutionary sadism of much of our popular music. Deafening rap lyrics like "fuck, fuck, fuck, fuck, kill, kill, kill, kill," program after program of people being blown away in washes of gore by ever bigger and faster guns, do not "please and instruct" in the manner that Horace once recommended. Of course, no one can *prove* that violence in art causes violence in life, but if art has any power at all, and those who manufacture it do claim great powers for it, then the effect of an art of violence must surely be to encourage what is worst in us.

Violence is not the only danger of techno-democratic art. Advertising we are now told is the essential democratic art, and if so, as seems arguable given the many artistic devices it uses, then it too encourages the worst in us. As the number of ads on TV increase, they crowd into our collective stories, and since they too tell a story, it is only a question of time until they become the story altogether. Will that be bad? For starters, we need only note that Madison Avenue is the most highly paid lying institution in history. Most of what it tells us is deceptive, intentionally so: It manipulates us into buying what cannot help us and what we do not need—what, in fact, may very well harm us irreparably, as in the case of tobacco.

ART gives the people what they want, say its postmodernist creators, and this may, sadly, be the fundamental fact of democratic art. But our artists insist that they are the source of new and revolutionary arts. They continue to play the role of the old *poète maudit*, big hatted and long bearded, as if they were still Shelley's "unacknowledged legislators of the world." Norman Mailer harangues us from the steps of the Pentagon. Salman Rushdie mocks the superstitions of Islam. Andy Warhol screens Campbell soup labels, making fun of art and the gullibility that pays kings' ransoms for it. Mapplethorpe

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aestheticizes sodomy; Karen Finley dances nude covered in symbolic chocolate-blood drawn of women defiled by the phallocracy; Oliver Stone indicts the establishment by telling lies about the killing of John Kennedy.

But of course, it is all a colossal public-relations sham. We know it and wink at it. Byron no longer really dies at Missilonghi, he is a political "activist." Oscar Wilde does not go into the dock, he runs in a marathon for AIDS. Van Gogh does not cut off his ear in the madness of *furor poeticus*, but does drugs. Behind every successful democratic artist is an agent who gets the maximum price for his clients, a PR man who sees to it that adulteries, drug arrests, and other outrages are chronicled in every paper, and accountants who invest incomes that would astound Croesus to ensure maximum return.

And the art they produce is equally a manufactured commercial product. The art market drives the price of paintings of all kinds to dizzying heights; the subject matter of TV is determined by advertisers; producing movies requires huge amounts of venture capital that demands a high return; government and foundations subsidize the art that looks like it might "pay off"; even such low-investment art as novels are marketplace commodities.

IN a curious and carefully concealed way, democratic art has become what would seem to be its opposite, an art of patronage. The reality appears most openly on TV. The patrons are no longer Maecenas, Lorenzo di Medici, or Louis XIV, but General Motors, Fixodent, Pampers, and Budweiser. Like all patrons, they get the art they pay for, and what they pay for is "the bottom line"—whatever will entice people to look at their ads and buy their products. The ads themselves push the "American Way of Life"—an upwardly mobile family with bright teeth, big cars, green lawn, dopey dad, clever but quiet mother, loud and aggressive children—as relentlessly as they do the product. The "Suits" interfere with the contents of the program only when it threatens to alienate its potential customers with exclusively frank portrayals of sex, radical politics, or religion. But anything goes really, so long as it doesn't offend. The aesthetic of democratic art is, alas, little more than: Will it attract attention? Will it sell more soap?

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The virtues and vices of economists

IRWIN M. STELZER

IN his introduction, Daniel Klein tells us that the reason he compiled this collection of essays, *What Do Economists Contribute?*,† is that he fears academic institutions are failing to advance sound economic thinking.

He certainly is right, as even a cursory glance at the *American Economic Review*, the journal of the academic economists' guild, will show. Academic acclaim and promotion go to those economists who tackle topics of little interest to anyone except tenure committees, and who then present the results in a series of equations. This use of the language of mathematics, due perhaps to the inability of present-day universities to teach what was once called English composition, suggests a precision that only those who are willing to dig into the often shaky data underlying the equations will ever learn is spurious. Frank Graham, in a 1942 book excerpted by Klein, puts it well: "The notion of equilibrium suggested equations; equations are prolific parents of their kind; and the game has gone on until the pages of the more esoteric economic journals have become a mass of hieroglyphics intelligible only to those who know the code." The saving grace is that the results of these exercises in academic ladder climbing are irrelevant to the concerns of governors and governed alike.

Klein hopes that his compilation will provide "a vision of the economist's responsibility ... [to] take a more vital role in public discourse." He exhorts economists to adopt the attitude of Aaron Wildavsky, whom he quotes as having written, "It is up to the wise to undo the damage done by the merely good." Adds Klein, "The merely good make errors, errors that economists can correct."

Well, perhaps. But these essays show that society would at times profit from fewer and less active economists. Deirdre

† New York University Press. 156 pp. $50.00.

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McCloskey, professor of economics and history at the University of Iowa, points out in her essay that economists have often led the nation astray, as when they persuaded government to extend its reach during the Progressive, New Deal, and Great Society eras. She would have them stop "peddling snake oil." And Gordon Tullock, generally credited with creating what is now known as the field of public choice, alleges that "most of the economists who looked at the problem [of the airlines] had approved the regulation" of that industry because they belonged to that small subset of economists who made a living testifying before regulatory agencies.

In short, some of the essays Klein has selected make us wonder if his call for more activists in the economics profession might not be ill-considered. When one thinks of those political economists who have had the greatest influence on public policy—Adam Smith, Karl Marx, John Maynard Keynes, and Milton Friedman—one has to conclude that an increase in the influence of economists has only a fifty-fifty chance of enhancing the general welfare.

NONE of that quartet is represented in this volume whose contributors, taken together, paint a more optimistic picture than Klein imagines. For it is the earlier economists who are the gloomiest about the influence of their profession; those writing today feel that economists indeed matter. Thus William H. Hutt, a graduate of the London School of Economics who spent the larger part of his career at the University of Capetown, is represented in Klein's compendium by a 1936 piece that sighs: "It is as a critic of actual affairs that the economist is most aware of his ineffectiveness"; and "Although an expert, no authority attaches to the economist's opinion." Whether this stems from Hutt's failure to persuade policy makers to stick with the gold standard, or his inability to persuade them that Keynes' nostrums were dangerous to the health of their economies, we cannot know.

Friedrich Hayek, in an address in 1944 to the students at the London School of Economics, was a bit more cheerful about his relevance—as well he should have been—than Hutt was. Still, although he agrees with Keynes that "the world is ruled by little else" save "the ideas of economists and political philosophers," he is quick to point out three disadvantages under which economists labor. First, whereas "the progress of the natural sciences often leads to unbounded confidence in the future of the human race, ... the economist's lot ... is to

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study a field in which, almost more than any other, human folly displays itself." Those seeking glamour and recognition and other "clear signs of success ... had better leave economics and turn to one of the more fortunate other sciences." Indeed, if an economist seeks fame and public approval, he will inevitably surrender "intellectual honesty."

Second, the economist faces the terrible burden "that those who have to apply economic theory are laymen, not really trained as economists." Although Hayek prefers this system of "imperfect government by democratic methods to a real government by experts," he laments the fact that economists can never be sure that their efforts will not "result in something very different from what we wish" when translated into real-world policy by politicians. Third, Hayek points to "the special difficulty, in our field, of distinguishing between the expert and the quack," a point made several years before so-called experts in the physical sciences turned their attention to environmental issues, making it equally difficult to separate the expert from the quack, the environmental scientist from the econut.

FAST forward to the more recent writings represented in this volume. Nobel Laureate Ronald Coase, writing in 1975, concedes that "economists cannot usually affect the main course of economic policy." But they can make their views felt "in small ways," and "even a modest success is not to be despised." For example, an economist who achieves the modest success of postponing for one week a government program that wastes $100 million annually "has, by his action, earned his salary for the whole of his life.... It is not necessary to change the world to justify our salaries."

Writing almost 10 years later, Tullock is even more sanguine in an essay that promises to tell economists, as the title announces, "How To Do Well While Doing Good." The choice for economists is not between writing useless articles in pursuit of tenure and contributing to the public welfare. "The average economist," he contends, "can benefit his career while simultaneously making a contribution to the public welfare." It was a group of economists, after all, that led the charge for the deregulation of the airline and trucking industries, and that, according to Tullock, prevented regulators from changing banking regulation to bring new technologies under their sway.

"Go Thou and Do Likewise," urges Tullock. Individual economists or "small collectives of economists" can select "some

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blatantly undesirable activity" of state or local governments, with little effort become experts in the relevant area, and, by pushing hard and getting media attention, change government policy. This will give the economist who has difficulty getting anything published "at least something [to put] on his vita, [and] something is better than nothing." Besides, "this is a particularly convenient way for economists to work out their charitable feelings"—by doing good.

To which Thomas Schelling, economics professor at the University of Maryland, adds a typically wise footnote in his 1994 commencement address to the department of economics at Berkeley. There are, he told the newly minted economists, "free lunches all over and just waiting to be discovered or created." He has in mind instances in which inefficient policies and practices can be replaced by more optimal ones, improving welfare for all in a non-zero-sum game. For example, "there are not just free lunches but banquets awaiting the former socialist countries that can institute enforceable contracts, copyrights, and patents, or eliminate rent-free housing and energy subsidies."

OF course, these calls to action by Tullock, Schelling, and others were selected for inclusion by Klein precisely because they support his view that economists should be more active in public discourse. He is candid enough to point out that such distinguished economists as Chicago's George Stigler disagree, but not so generous as to include Stigler's essay on the subject (even though he does find space to print a critique of it.)

It is probably true that more vigorous participation in public affairs by economists would add to our well-being—that is, if those economists proved to be of the sort represented in this little book. But as Tullock points out, the majority of economists were wrong in the early days of the debate over regulation. "This is one of the problems we face when we talk about economists having a good effect on policy. We must admit that in the past economists have frequently had a bad effect."

Their influence has been regrettable not only because their analyses or, more recently, their models led them astray. Rather, it is because they, or at least many of them, fail to recognize that efficiency is only one of several possible goals of public policy. Coase, for example, contends in his essay that government control of the field price of natural gas in the 1960s

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encouraged consumption and discouraged exploration for new supplies, producing a "regulation-induced shortage." But he then assumes that his demonstration disposes of the issue: Regulation was inefficient, as economists use the term, and therefore a mistake. Perhaps it was. But showing that some policy is inefficient is the beginning, not the end, of policy analysis. During the course of the debate over natural gas regulation, Alfred Kahn, then-professor at Cornell University, identified an issue ignored by Coase: whether a Texas oil producer should have a still higher income, or a consumer in New Jersey a bit more money with which to attend the theater a few more times during the year.

The point Kahn was making is important. Certainly, it was recognized by Schelling, who, referring to the "free lunches" (efficiency increases) that are out there for the taking, added, "How the lunches are distributed matters." To that debate, the economist qua economist has little to add. He can and should advise policy makers of the costs and benefits of various alternatives; he can and should show them how to achieve their goals at minimum cost. But he cannot, for example, ultimately decide that it is morally better to allow the efficient price system to distribute goods during wartime than to ration them in a way that society decides is more "equitable." If the British famously prefer queuing to the efficiencies of what New York University professor Israel Kirzner calls "the social marvel that is constituted by the market economy," or the Germans their generous social benefits to full employment, economists can—and do—point out the costs in lost wealth. But they should not therefore conclude that such a demonstration ends the argument. A political decision to damn the cost and go ahead with some program or other is not necessarily wrong because it offends the economist's sensibilities. The economist can, as Hayek points out, make value judgments, but he should recognize those for what they are, and distinguish them from the contribution only he can make by drawing on his profession's analytical tools and data bases.

PERHAPS all we can hope for is that economists will be quick to admit error. Hayek warned the students at the London School of Economics that "nothing is more pernicious to intellectual honesty than pride in not having changed one's opinion." We might also adopt the modest goal enunciated by Keynes, who once defined the economist's function as "to promote clear thinking."

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Impoverished theories of the working poor

HEATHER MAC DONALD

IT'S easy to take the liberal academic out of the ivory tower but not the ivory tower out of the liberal academic. Katherine S. Newman, an urban anthropologist at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, spent two years in Central Harlem studying the inner-city working poor—specifically, workers in an unnamed national fast-food chain she calls Burger Barn. Newman's goal was to cast light on an economic group she claims middle-class Americans stigmatize and ignore. But the resulting book, *No Shame in My Game*,† reveals instead how staunchly academics cling to their cherished beliefs about American racism and injustice in the face of overwhelming evidence to the contrary.

Newman arrived in Harlem with two stories to tell. The primary one concerned the inner-city working poor. The inner city, her story began, is filled with people whose commitment to work and family is virtually indistinguishable from that of middle-class Americans. But overwhelming "structural" barriers, above all racism, she was determined to say, prevent these would-be burghers from capitalizing on their strengths. Racism creates an economic deck so stacked in favor of whites that hard-working blacks and Hispanics stand little chance of escaping poverty and the ghetto. American society then adds insult to injury, Newman argues, by subjecting low-wage workers to "withering criticism" and equating them to Indian "untouchables."

Writing about the working poor is hazardous for the liberal academic, who wants to avoid stigmatizing welfare recipients. Heaven forbid Newman give the slightest support to that pernicious "conservative" distinction, as she calls it, between the "deserving" and the "undeserving" poor. So while Newman's primary focus is on workers, she simultaneously carries on a

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subterranean argument about those on welfare. If the latter are not working, she suggests, it is because they too face discrimination. If they are taking drugs, stealing, having babies they cannot support, or raising criminals, it is because they are burdened by "the crushing personal costs of living where good jobs have gone (away)." But don't think nonworking welfare recipients aren't pulling their own weight. In fact, they are providing indispensable labor as baby-sitters and "neighborhood-watchers," Newman asserts.

THE only problem with Newman's stories about the working and nonworking poor is that her subjects contradict them on every page. True, she did find dozens of people with admirable pluck, who go to great lengths to retain their jobs, and who resoundingly believe in the value of work. But rather than confirming Newman's "structural" analysis of poverty, the Burger Barn workers insist that a person's character determines his fate. Newman acknowledges these radical views, but does not take them seriously enough to change her assumptions.

Newman's fast-food workers don't accept her explanations for the large number of nonworkers in the inner city. First to fall is the lack-of-jobs explanation. "There is so much in this city; it's always hiring," a former welfare recipient told Newman. "It may not be what you want. It may not be the pay you want. But you will always get a job."

It turns out that many would-be workers are their own worst enemy. Fast-food managers—all minorities—complain about boys who come in with their pants hanging down, a "Niggers with Attitude" T-shirt on, a beer in their hand, and then ask for a job application. "That mentality keeps people from getting jobs. Who do you think is gonna hire you?" asks one frustrated boss. Before blaming others for your jobless state, he advises, "maybe you need to understand how to maintain a job."

Newman's supervisors show a distressing tendency to generalize about local residents. One hiring manager tells her: "The folks who live around here are irresponsible and apt to steal." Most managers show a preference for workers from other boroughs—it decreases the chances that their friends will cadge free food—and for immigrants. A black manager says: "These immigrant guys come in and say 'Yes, sir!' And they are willing to do anything."

Newman regrets her subjects' penchant for jumping to negative conclusions about the local workforce based on mere "snip-

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pets of information," but she cannot bring herself to call their views bigoted, though if a midtown manager were to make these judgements, he would be hauled into court. Newman never considers whether these typically conservative 'stereotypes' may be grounded in hard-won experience.

NEWMAN'S charge that racism keeps Harlem residents out of work also fails the street-smart test. "It doesn't matter what color you are. You could get a job whether you are black or white," a girl says. Newman seems frustrated by her subjects' resistance to a victim mentality. She does find would-be workers who blame racism when they don't get a job, but they are just as quick to deny that racism cripples other people's lives. One Puerto Rican boy claims that he was not offered a midtown job because of his skin color, yet also maintains that employers "don't judge you by your skin color. My mother is dark-skinned, but she works with rich people and stuff."

Newman parcels out her credulity in such contradictory cases carefully. She presents the charge of discrimination as a "recognition of the truth"; she dismisses the claim of widespread opportunity as a "blame-the-victim view of inequality," arising, in effect, from false consciousness. It doesn't occur to her that people may use racism as a convenient excuse for their own disappointments, while their observations of the world compel them to a different conclusion when speaking more generally.

Contrary to Newman's preposterous notion that American society at large stigmatizes low-wage workers, the only stigma her inner-city burger-flippers face is homegrown. Her subjects receive constant verbal abuse from friends and strangers—ostensibly for taking a low-status job, but in fact for trying to succeed and play by the rules. Customers use fast-food cashiers and other counter workers as verbal punching bags on which to take out their frustrations. Friends and strangers demand free food; the price of denial is more insults.

Customer abuse of fast-food workers is particularly pointed between races. Blacks, especially, curse at Hispanic workers. Newman justifies this aggression as a response to Harlem's weak job market, which, of course, is the greater society's fault. But it's hard to see how the weak job market explains racial booby-trapping on the job. Hispanic workers in one shop mistakenly believed that a new worker was white, and so refused to teach her the ropes. Only when she cursed in Spanish did they rally around this suddenly destigmatized compatriot.

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None of this raw ethnic discrimination receives the slightest word of criticism from Newman.

When it comes to welfare, the fast-food workers are even more contrarian than in their rejection of racism as an explanation for poverty. They scoff at the notion that welfare recipients face "structural" constraints. "They want to live for free," one boy explains simply. "And they be having too many children." This is not Newman's view, who maintains hilariously that having a baby out of wedlock at a young age is a rational choice that can actually help a girl settle down.

It is a favorite conceit of poverty advocates that the inner-city is rife with gnawing hunger and deprivation. Fully subscribing to that conceit, Newman asks a former addict named Clarence why people in Harlem "have such a hard time surviving day to day." If anyone were likely to share the questioner's premise, it would be Clarence, whose job search was not panning out. But he rejected it: "I don't think they have a hard time surviving day to day. They make it hard for themselves because they haven't any positive goals or have no direction."

NEWMAN'S subjects offer some common-sense wisdom about why some people succeed and others don't: "Some people are willing to try hard and therefore they can make it if the deck is stacked against them or not," a teenage boy tells her. "Other people are really the type that don't like to go through tough things, so when things get tough they just give up."

Despite her best efforts, Newman never provides evidence to the contrary. Far from facing a closed "opportunity structure," Burger Barn workers inhabit a company fanatically zealous about promoting line-workers to management. Few of the workers who pass through the shops, however, have the discipline to take advantage of the available training. Newman's favorite character periodically blows-up against managers and has to "move on," yet she portrays him as a victim nonetheless.

As for the world outside Harlem's Burger Barns, it really does border on the delusional to portray it as hostile to minorities. Every high-profile professional firm in New York spends many thousands of dollars annually trying to "diversify" its workforce. At the lower-skilled entry level, employers are desperate for anybody, of any color or creed, who will show up on time and do what is expected of them.

Most of the girls Newman profiles have illegitimate children by the time her research ends. That, more than any "structural barrier," will likely keep them in poverty. And the

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one thing which American society should do to help the inner-city working poor, not mentioned in *No Shame in My Game*, is to provide schools that actually teach students to read, write, and speak proper English, something Newman's subjects are often hard-pressed to do. Liberal academics like Newman would provide a far greater service if they took seriously the behavioral and educational deficiencies of the poor, rather than search futilely for a phantom racism.

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The feminist church?

JAMES NUECHTERLEIN

ONE of my favorite hymns as a young boy growing up in the Lutheran Church was "Onward, Christian Soldiers." Others must have liked it as well, for I remember singing it frequently both in worship services and in Sunday school. Over the years, however, those occasions steadily declined. It is now so long since I have had the chance to sing it that I assumed, until I looked it up the other day, that it had been dropped from current Lutheran hymnals. It's still there, it turns out, but it might as well not be: "Onward, Christian Soldiers" is today, in effect, a nonhymn.

Leon J. Podles does not mention "Onward, Christian Soldiers" in *The Church Impotent: The Feminization of Christianity*,† but its fate is a part of his story. A Christianity that is suspicious of masculinity will disapprove of the martial imagery of "Onward, Christian Soldiers."

For Podles, much more than the fate of hymns is at stake. Armed with considerable statistical and anecdotal evidence, he argues that men have largely deserted Christianity, at least in the West. They have done so, he thinks, because they have come to see the Church as the province of women, and so they shun and fear it. "Men do not go to church," he says, because "they regard involvement in religion as unmasculine, and almost more than anything they want to be masculine." The men who remain in the Church, clergy included, are disproportionately gay or effeminate. Podles cites psychological tests suggesting that "very masculine men [show] little interest in religion, very feminine men great interest."

The feminization of Christianity is not, Podles suggests, a new development. Mainstream Christianity's current embrace of the feminist critique of patriarchy and its sympathetic attitude toward homosexuality are only the most recent—though,

† Spence. 288 pp. $27.95.

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to his mind, not thereby the less unsettling—signs of a process set in motion centuries ago. It is a process he thinks ominous in its implications for both Church and society.

Things were different, Podles insists, at the founding of Christianity. Jesus' life and ministry followed the classic masculine journey or quest: separation from family (especially the potentially smothering mother); ceremonies of initiation and testing that bespeak death and rebirth (baptism, temptation in the wilderness); leadership of others, males in particular, in an agonistic struggle against entrenched ideas and authority; and a willingness to endure pain and suffering on behalf of others even unto death.

So also with those who followed Jesus. "The early Church knew," Podles says, "that the vocation of the Christian was essentially masculine." The sacraments of the Church—baptism, confirmation, and the Eucharist—initiated the early Christians, male and female alike, into Christ's suffering, death, and redemption. Unity with Christ was most fully achieved through martyrdom or "the equivalent of martyrdom, the life of the monk." While it was always the case that the Church, like Jesus himself, manifested aspects of the feminine, through the first millennium and beyond "the masculine character of Christianity was clear."

IT was somewhere around the thirteenth century, in Podles' telling, that the Church's piety tipped decisively toward the feminine. Most critical was the development, under Bernard of Clairvaux, of "bridal mysticism." The Church had always understood itself as the bride of Christ, but Bernard extended that understanding from the collective Church to the individual Christian. Thus was born in the medieval Church (though Podles concedes there were precedents) an affective spirituality, suffused with erotic images borrowed from the Song of Songs, that stimulated a nascent women's movement but offended and alienated men. The use of bridal language to characterize the Christian's relationship with God, Podles says, carried homosexual overtones that men wanted nothing to do with.

The rise of Scholasticism, with the revival of Aristotle under Thomas Aquinas, furthered the feminization process. Prior to the Scholastics, Podles argues, Christian theology united prayer and thought in contemplation of God. The Scholastics, however, "thought according to the rules of logic and prayed according to the rules of faith, which was more and more a

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matter of the heart and emotions rather than the mind." Out of the dissociation of piety from theology there developed a "religion of the heart," in which feminine receptivity became the distinguishing mark of Christian piety and masculine initiative an obstacle to union with God. "This feminized spirituality," Podles concludes, "identified the Church as the sphere of women (or of those men who were like women) and reinforced the male desire to keep a safe distance between themselves and a religion that threatened to emasculate them."

The long-term effects of feminization, Podles says, were bad not just for the role of men in the Church but for theology itself. The transfer of bridal imagery from the Church to the particular Christian bred a spiritual individualism that weakened the bonds of the ecclesiological community in favor of a privatized faith. Podles perceives as well a gradual diminution of doctrinal clarity and analytical rigor. The feminine impulse is to integration and communion, as opposed to masculine separation and differentiation. A feminized Christianity perpetually threatens to collapse the classic polarities of sin and grace, death and life, into an all-embracing universalism. A feminized Church, Podles warns, is ever in danger of succumbing to a vague Gnostic spiritualism.

THIS downward path, Podles concedes, has had some detours. Bernard himself, after all, was the champion not just of bridal mysticism but of the First Crusade. He was the author both of *Sermons on the Song of Songs* and *On the New Christian Militia*. Later on, both the Reformation and Counter-Reformation had strong masculine characteristics. Luther (who was himself greatly influenced by Bernard) emphasized the Christian's unending conflict against sin and the devil, and the Jesuits likewise depicted the inner life as one of spiritual combat. There have been similar countercurrents all the way down to today's Promise Keepers—the evangelical revival movement that attempts to reclaim men for Christian leadership in their families and churches.

But, Podles fears, these are all rear-guard skirmishes in a losing battle. The churches remain, for the most part, bastions of women; and men—leery of losing their masculinity—avoid the churches.

The costs to society of male alienation from Christianity could be considerable. Masculinity is, Podles says, a natural religion of sorts. Men want to become saviors, protecting all in their care. This desire for transcendence, when unmoored from

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religious restraints, can degenerate into a dangerous fascination with darkness and nihilism. It can turn into a yearning for the primitive—for celebration of savage male energies and a deification of male sexual potency. Men need healthy outlets for their instincts—for example, in sports, male brotherhoods, fraternities, and military adventure. They ought to be able to find an outlet in its most exalted form, Podles argues, in imitation of the journey of Christ.

IT is difficult to know what to make of all this. Podles' statistics concerning the predominance of women among Western Christians are hard to refute. But still one can't help but think that he has missed the real story. The weakest part of his argument is his specification of where things went wrong (if, indeed, one chooses to so characterize the situation). When he posits the equal participation of men and women in the Church during Christianity's first 1,200 years, he weakly adds, "as far as we know." His evidence here is necessarily impressionistic and sketchy, and his own extended references to prethirteenth-century precedents for feminization and of postthirteenth-century countercurrents to it bring his thesis into question.

That thesis is dubious enough on its own: Podles imposes on bridal mysticism a weight of influence it cannot sustain. Bridal imagery is pervasive in Christian thought, but it pertains far more to the Church as a whole than to the individual soul. I am told by Roman Catholic friends that this is true of Catholicism; I know it is true of Protestantism, where, in fact, bridal mysticism scarcely exists. And yet, in Podles' view, Protestants are no less feminized than Catholics.

My guess is that the phenomenon Podles describes as occurring at a particular point in history has been present, with variations both in intensity and in geographical incidence, from the beginning, and that tensions between "masculine" and "feminine" aspects of Christian thought reflect inescapable antinomies in Christian theology. It does not seem to me useful to insist, as Podles does, that Christianity is essentially masculine. Indeed, if we must decide the issue one way or the other, I would think that the reverse argument is the stronger. It is noteworthy that Podles makes no reference to the beatitudes, which prescribe a piety one would hardly describe as masculine. Nor does he mention such Pauline summaries of the virtues as the one in Colossians 3:12-14, where Christians are urged to practice compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness,

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patience, forbearance, forgiveness, and, above all, love. Such virtues are not exactly a prescription for muscular Christianity. Much of the Christian life, moreover, is characterized by an attitude of receptivity—and receptivity, Podles' denials notwithstanding, is a trait more natural to women than to men.

PODLES' argument seems, in the end, fundamentally skewed. If men shun Christianity, it is not primarily because they identify it with homosexuality or fear being swallowed up in a feminine world. Christianity's feminization problem—if that is the right term—resides, contrary to Podles, more in its theology than in its piety.

Christianity is a religion of love, which means, virtually by definition, that it teeters perpetually on the brink of sentimentality. Podles' preoccupation with polarized anthropological models of masculinity and femininity points us in the wrong direction for understanding the heart of his problem. We would do better to attend to Nietzsche, whom Podles mentions in passing but breezily dismisses.

Nietzsche famously scorned Christianity as a life-denying religion of the weak—a religion for those who are inadequate to the challenges of existence. His view was, I believe, a caricature of Christian theology rightly understood, but Christianity, by its very nature, is ever in danger of presenting his caricature as its orthodoxy. When Christians reduce the great drama of sin and grace to the bathos of the Higher Niceness—as, especially in modern times, they are sadly wont to do—they make of the gospel an escape from reality, not the paradoxically compelling engagement of it that has commended the faith through the centuries.

Christianity needs not so much a more virile piety as a more tough-minded theology. The piety will then take care of itself, and worries over feminization will become as irrelevant as they ought to be.

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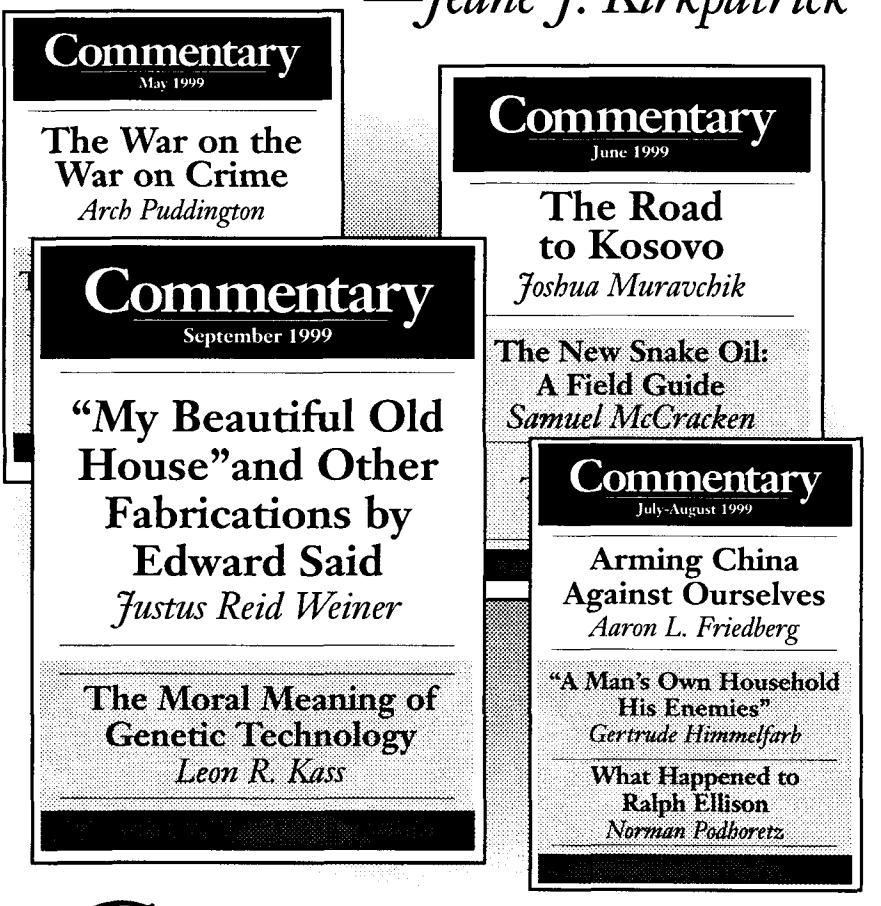

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